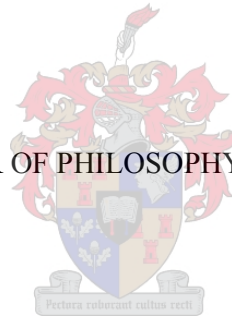


MAKING DISCIPLES IN CURRENT MISSIONARY PRACTICE IN MALAWI:
AN EMPIRICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF RELIGIOUS WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

The Central African country of Malawi has a population of over 15 million people and more than 500 Protestant missionaries. In spite of an overall sense of partnership and community among missionaries in Malawi, a significant tension exists between the approaches that various Protestant missionaries have taken in their attempt fulfill The Great Commission of Matthew 28. This tension is not limited to Malawi. Missiologists worldwide have identified several different models of mission work. Some of these models emphasize the verbal proclamation of the gospel message while other models emphasize social action and acts of mercy as an equal or primary focus.

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine what the dominant models of mission work in Malawi are in practice. Is the emphasis more on gospel proclamation or social action and how does that relate to the commission in Matthew 28? In order to determine this, the researcher 1) investigates the growing tension between various models of missionary work, 2) analyzes various Protestant missionary models as they relate to key passages of Scripture, 3) examines qualitative theological perspectives surrounding the issue of evangelism, social action, Matthew 25, and Matthew 28, 4) conducts empirical quantitative research among missionaries currently serving in Malawi, 5) conducts empirical qualitative research among Christians in the West that have an interest in Malawi's missionary work, 6) explores *normative* perceptions of the *traditional prioritism* model of missionary work, 7) develops a revised praxis for churches in the West that send missionaries to help them become more effective in developing their models of mission.

Traditionally, missionaries have focused on gospel proclamation and social action has been a secondary, but important, emphasis. Today, some missionaries elevate social action as a co-priority with proclamation while others practice social action almost exclusively. Many missionaries in Malawi are so focused on social action activities like medicine, general education, and orphan care that they have little time to devote to Bible teaching, baptism, and church strengthening. Christians in the West who have an interest in missionary work in Malawi are naturally concerned about both

gospel proclamation and social action. They desire that the physical needs of Malawians would not be neglected, but they also desire that the gospel message would be proclaimed in Malawi and that missionaries would make disciples by teaching all that Christ has commanded. This is why a research project that involves a theological study in relation to an analysis of the praxis of religious workers in Malawi will be useful. It should help both Christians in the West and missionaries in Malawi to maintain priorities that will sustain both gospel proclamation as well as social action in a needy country like Malawi.

One of the desired outcomes of this study is to determine the factors that contribute to missionary activity which neglects neither gospel proclamation, nor the physical needs of others. In order to determine these factors, it will be beneficial to ascertain a more thorough understanding of different missionary models and evaluate their potential deficiencies and strengths.

The main research question this study addresses is: What are the current models of missionary practice among missionaries in Malawi today and how do those models relate to key passages for missionaries, such as Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 25:31-46?

OPSOMMING

Malawi, 'n land in sentraal Afrika, het 'n bevolking van meer as 15 miljoen mense en meer as 500 Protestantse sendelinge. Alhoewel daar goeie samewerking tussen Sending-organisasies is, ervaar hulle wel spanning rakende hulle onderskeie benaderings tot die Evangelisasie opdrag van Mattheus 28. Hierdie spanning is nie beperk tot Malawi nie. Wêreldwyd het Sendingkundiges verskillende modelle vir sendingwerk geïdentifiseer. Van hierdie modelle beklemtoon die verkondiging van die Evangelie, terwyl ander die sosiale uitleef van die Evangelie verkondig deur middel van barmhartigheid.

Die doel van hierdie proefskrif is om te bepaal wat die dominante modelle van sendingwerk in Malawi in die praktyk is. Is die klem meer op Evangelie verkondiging of op sosiale aksie, en hoe hou hierdie verband met die opdrag in Mattheus 28? Om hierdie vas te stel, gaan die navorser, 1) die toenemende spanning tussen verskillende modelle van sendingwerk ondersoek, 2) die verskillende Protestantse sending-modelle ontleed volgens hulle verwantskap aan kern gedeeltes van die Skrif, 3) empiriese kwantitatiewe navorsing doen onder huidige sendelinge in Malawi, 4) empiriese kwalitatiewe navorsing doen onder Christene in die Westerse wêreld wat belangstel in sendingswerk in Malawi, 5) *normatiewe* begrip van die *tradisionele voorkeur* model van sendingwerk verken, 6) verbeterde praktyke ontwikkel wat kerke in die Weste, wat sendelinge wil uitstuur, kan navolg om hulle te help met die ontwikkeling van hulle sending-modelle.

Tradisioneel het sendelinge op Evangelie-verkondiging gefokus en enige sosiale aksies was wel belangrik, maar van sekondêre belang. Vandag het sommige sendelinge sosiale aksies verhef tot 'n mede prioriteit gelyk aan Evangelie-verkondiging, terwyl ander amper eksklusief sosiale aksies bedryf. Vele sendelinge in Malawi is so gefokus op sosiale aksie soos mediese hulp, algemene onderwys, en die versorging vir weeskinders, dat hulle min tyd het om hulself toe te wy aan Bybelse onderrig, doop en die versterking van kerke. Christene in die Weste, wat belangstel in sendingwerk in Malawi, is van nature besorg oor beide Evangelie verkondiging sowel

as sosiale aksies. Hulle wil graag hê dat die fisiese behoeftes van Malawiërs nie verwaarloos word nie, maar hulle begeer ook dat die Evangelie boodskap in Malawi verkondig word en dat sendelinge dissipels sal maak deur hulle alles wat Christus beveel het, te leer. Dit is die rede waarom dit nuttig sal wees om 'n navorsingsprojek te hê wat 'n teologiese studie insluit rakende 'n ontleding van die gebruike van godsdienstige werkers in Malawi. Dit behoort Christene in die Weste sowel as sendelinge in Malawi te help om prioriteite te handhaaf wat beide Evangelie verkondiging sowel as sosiale aksies ondersteun in 'n behoeftige land soos Malawi.

Een van die verlangde resultate van hierdie studie is om die faktore te bepaal wat bydra tot sendingwerk wat nie Evangelie verkondiging verwaarloos nie en ook nie die fisiese behoeftes van ander verontagsaam nie. Om hierdie faktore te bepaal sal dit waardevol wees om 'n deegliker begrip van verskillende sending-modelle vas te stel en hulle potensiële tekortkominge en sterkpunte te evalueer.

Die hoof navorsings-vra wat hierdie studie aanspreek is: Wat is die huidige modelle van sendingpraktyk onder sendelinge in Malawi en hoe hou dit verband met kern Skrifgedeeltes vir sendelinge soos Matthéüs 28:18-20 en Matthéüs 25:31-46?

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Jesus Christ. May His name be proclaimed to the very ends of the earth and especially throughout my beloved Malawi. May those from the 'Warm Heart of Africa' grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Oh, that the people of Malawi would have godly pastors in each village and in every community who would expose the Word of God with such accuracy and clarity that many would be transformed by the renewing power of the Word. For then, more who are transformed by the living God would naturally reach out to those around them with a supernatural love and concern for both spiritual and physical wellbeing. For what person who knows the God of compassion and mercy, could not care for those around them?

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To my students at African Bible College, thank you for your assistance with this research and for your interaction in the classroom. I love being a part of your lives. To my future students at African Bible College and at the Central African Preaching Academy, may you join us in a movement of lifting high the Word of God, unleashing it and exposing it in Malawi in such a way that it builds up His church and reaches the world for Christ.

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ACRONYMNS/ABBREVIATIONS

ABC African Bible College
AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMFC African Missions for Christ
CBC Calvary Bible Church
HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MMS Methodist Missionary Society
MLT Missions Leadership Team
NASB New American Standard Bible
NIV New International Version
NGO Non-governmental Organization
NTM New Tribes Mission
PRP Permanent Residence Permit
RAND Random Number
SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SVM Student Volunteer Movement
TEP Temporary Employment Permit
YMCA Young Men's Christian Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND DESIGN

1.1 Introduction

Matthew's Gospel concludes with a commission from Jesus to his disciples to 'make disciples' (Matthew 28:18-20). This passage is commonly referred to as 'The Great Commission.' Many commentators today view this section of Scripture as the central message of Scripture. As one commentator has said,

If a Christian understands all the rest of the gospel of Matthew but fails to understand this closing passage, he has missed the point of the entire book. This passage is the climax and major focal point not only of this gospel but of the entire New Testament. It is not an exaggeration to say that, in its broadest sense, it is the focal point of all Scripture, Old Testament as well as New (MacArthur, 1989: 52-53).

In his book, *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch observes that the 'heart' of the 'Great Commission' is to 'make disciples' (Bosch, 1991: 73). He further states that "the two participles 'baptizing' and 'teaching' are clearly subordinate to 'make disciples' and describe the form the disciple-making is to take" (Bosch, 1991: 73). In support of this observation, Bosch refers to Trilling (1964:28-32); Hahn (1980:35); and Matthey (1980:168).

Other theologians raise red flags about the Great Commission, especially when it is applied by only looking at Matthew 28:18-20, without consideration of Matthew's greater context. As Lesslie Newbigin has stated, "taken in isolation . . . it could seem to validate a sort of triumphant style of mission that accorded all too easily with the political and economic expansion of the European powers . . ." (Newbigin, 1987: 32). The warning here is against the temptation to use the Great Commission as a slogan for doing mission in a way that does not reflect a balanced perspective of Matthew's Gospel.

One may ask some key questions about the statements of these writers, is the Great Commission indeed the climax of all Scripture? If so, what is the best way to fulfill

this commission? How does one fulfill it with a balanced perspective from the book of Matthew?

1.2 Problem

The problem on which this study will focus is the practice of missionaries currently in Malawi and how they might relate to the Great Commission as presented in Matthew 28:18-20. If missionaries in Malawi are neglecting the practice of baptism and teaching, does it mean that they are neglecting the Great Commission? Are missionaries in Malawi applying Matthew 28:18-20 properly to their work?

Many churches that send out missionaries do so with the goal of fulfilling the Great Commission as presented in Matthew 28:18-20. Historically, missionaries have been involved in both evangelistic work as well as social work and priorities of one over the other have varied in different time periods (cf. Bosch, 1991: 321-323). Today, there may be some missionaries who, in practice, see mission as merely social justice or mercy work.¹ Others may see the goal of mission as exclusively evangelism. A key question that will benefit churches is: What balance should a church maintain between missionaries primarily involved in social justice and missionaries involved primarily in evangelism? There are some who propose that social action is merely a byproduct of gospel proclamation. One such writer says:

In recent years there has been a push from evangelicals in the United States to bring drinking water to Central America and mosquito nets to Africa. This resurgence of compassion is encouraging, and is already making an impact in many countries that otherwise would be closed to missionaries. However, mosquito nets are not the end for which God created the world. It is critical for churches to view missions for what they are: the expansion and strengthening of the church of Jesus Christ around the world. God's plan for social transformation is the gospel, and you either believe that or you don't. When churches approach mercy ministry as an end in and of itself, they are missing the Great

¹ This researcher recognizes that much has been written on the distinctions between social action, social justice, ministry, *diakonia*, mercy work, and other such terms that describe the practical outworking of care. Some writers are not pleased when these terms are used interchangeably as they see this as a "profound change in perceptions" (Collins, 1990:3). However, since this study focuses on the tension between gospel proclamation and social works in mission, several terms that fall under the umbrella of social work will be used interchangeably. This is not to infer that terms like service, ministry, social action, and social justice are identical in all aspects.

Commission. But when they approach missions as the spreading of the gospel and the establishment of churches, and then they come alongside those churches to minister to the poor in them, then the church's testimony is validated and the gospel is vindicated. Corruption will never be eliminated, and the poor we will always have with us. But the church in America can use her wealth to bring the gospel into the midst of poverty, and in doing so lives will be changed. This is what it means to love the poor. God's character is demonstrated by the ministry of his missionaries. A church can be established in the slums of México because the members of the church will love the poor there. A church can be established in Johannesburg because Christians will show South Africans the love that God has for them, by the way they love their orphans. As churches are established and pastors are trained, lasting social change comes. This change is never the goal, but is always a byproduct of authentic Christian ministry. (Johnson, 2010: 151-152)

At the other end of the spectrum, other writers propose that evangelism and proclamation of the gospel is not primary. They insist that those who promote the primacy of proclamation are harming the church. Lesslie Newbigin accurately describes the view that opposes the priority of proclamation:

There has been a long tradition which has isolated the declaratory element in the Church's mission and insisted that it must have the priority. Evangelism, the direct preaching of the gospel, it is often said, must be the first priority. Everything else is secondary or – at best – auxiliary. The missionary movement at the present time suffers from the running battle between those who make this emphasis on the primacy of evangelism, of the declaratory function of the Church, and those who insist that the first priority must be given to action for challenging injustice, prejudice, and oppression, action for justice and peace. For how, it may be asked, is a Christian message to be credible if its meaning is not being illustrated in patterns of action which corresponds to it? (1989: 131)

This researcher first began to ponder the issues surrounding social action and gospel proclamation a number of years ago when a young South African man asked a simple question. He asked this researcher, 'What is a missionary?' At first, the answer seemed obvious, but before answering, this researcher asked the young man why he wanted to know. He replied, "Because I have met all kinds of people in Africa who call themselves missionaries and I can't figure out what they all have in common." Indeed, some have stated that "ultimately mission remains undefinable" (Bosch, 1991: 9).

It was apparent to this young South African that many people who call themselves missionaries are not directly involved in the proclamation of the gospel. According to his understanding, a missionary is someone who has been sent out to help fulfill the Great Commission through evangelistic work (Matt. 28:18–20). The imperative in Matthew 28:18–20 is ‘make disciples.’ He believed that the heart of mission is making disciples by baptizing and teaching. In Matthew 28:18–20 the participles “baptizing” (βαπτίζοντες - *baptizontes*) and “teaching” (διδασκοντες - *didaskontes*) help describe how one ‘makes disciples.’ According to his understanding, unless someone is involved in baptizing new believers and teaching them all that Christ has commanded, they are not directly involved in what that the Great Commission commands. This is not to say that if a missionary is not *directly* involved in baptism or teaching he or she is necessarily less important. The issue to be considered is not, ‘who is doing the more important job?’ but rather, ‘what jobs are being accomplished and what jobs are possibly being neglected?’ It will be beneficial to learn exactly what missionaries are doing in Malawi so the church might be able to compare the practice of missionaries with the normative responsibilities for fulfilling the Great Commission.

Many people who call themselves ‘missionaries’ are not directly involved with baptizing and teaching, but rather they are more involved with social issues like working with AIDS orphans, feeding the hungry, providing job training, and other mercy ministries. While these are all important tasks, a pertinent question is, ‘What should the primary activity of a missionary be?’

In many churches, a world map can be found on a foyer wall that has a big pin stuck into the city where that church is located. The big pin represents that church. Tied to that big pin are strings reaching out to smaller pins all over the map where missionaries who are supported by that sending church are working. Next to those smaller pins are pictures of those missionaries. Above the map are the words, *Go into all the world and make disciples*. Below the map is the reference, *Matthew 28:18-20*. An ironic possibility is that a church could send missionaries all over the world to fulfill the Great Commission and yet none of their missionaries are making disciples as described in Matthew 28:18-20.

This researcher is not suggesting that discipleship as baptism and teaching is the only acceptable model for mission. However, if the majority of those involved in mission are neglecting the stated duties of the Great Commission, the result could be that the church today is not focused on the ‘climax’ of Scripture. Again, a key question that will help us to determine the seriousness of this issue is: ‘What are missionaries in Malawi doing in practice?’

To state the question differently, how do the churches and missionaries deal with the convergence and ‘creative tension’ in missiological literature between mission as evangelization and mission as social justice or social development / transformation? (Bosch, 1991: 406). Bosch states, “One attempt to solve the enigma of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility is to distinguish between two different *mandates*, the one spiritual, the other the social. The first refers to the commission to announce the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ; the second calls Christians to responsible participation in human society, including working for human well-being and justice” (1991:403, italics in text).

In short, this empirical/theological study can make a valuable contribution to churches in Malawi and churches that send missionaries to Malawi because it can answer the questions: What are missionary practices in Malawi? Why are missionaries working in Malawi (or what are their goals)? When the motives and practices for mission work are understood, they can then be compared to the biblical mandate to make disciples of all nations and an objective measurement of success or failure should be evident.

1.3 Preliminary Study

One work that this candidate has discovered which relates closely to this study is a dissertation by Paul Chinchin that was presented at Stellenbosch in 2001 and promoted by Professor C. M. Pauw. The title of this work is *Reformation of Mission: Reversing Mission Trends in Africa, An Assessment of Protestant Mission Methods in Malawi*. Paul Chinchin’s work includes a Historical Study of the Church in Malawi,

a Missiological study of a Theology of Mission, and Empirical Research of Leadership Education Levels.

There are some significant differences between the focus of Chinchén's work and the proposed work of this candidate. Perhaps the major difference is that Chinchén's empirical study focused on churches in Malawi while this researcher desires to interview missionaries in Malawi to discover their practice of mission. Another difference is that Chinchén's conclusion is that 'leadership development' should be the 'emerging paradigm of mission' (Chinchén, 2001:38, 268). Chinchén's leadership development paradigm results in Christian institutions of higher learning throughout Africa that produce graduates who are prepared to infiltrate every sector of society with the goal of changing society. He even suggests that 'it requires radical change in government to transform society in any significant way' (Chinchén, 2001: 269).

Paul Chinchén's dissertation concludes that a new paradigm of leadership development is the key to modern day mission. His closing sentence is, 'It is impossible for the church to function in the many modes of mission, especially in this time of great harvest, without skilled, trained, well-developed and well-rounded leadership' (Chinchén, 2001: 273).

A key difference between this candidate's study and Paul Chinchén's is that this candidate is looking back to the Matthean paradigm and its relationship to mission practices today. This relationship would include both baptism and teaching as they relate to disciple-making. The issue of baptism is not dealt with in Paul Chinchén's dissertation. While this candidate agrees that there is a place for leadership development in mission, his presupposition is that the best way to transform society is not through a radical change in government, but rather through the Matthean paradigm and its application in local churches.

This candidate also questions that the prevailing emerging paradigm in Malawi is leadership development. Another possibility is that the prevailing emerging paradigm is mercy ministry instead of baptism and teaching. However, no one knows what

missionaries understand by mercy ministry and disciple making, and what the scope of mercy ministry is and its relationship to making disciples through baptism.

Another helpful dissertation that will be a good resource for this study is the work of Kyung Soo Na, *Understanding the Great Commission Against the Backdrop of Matthew's Gospel as a Whole*. Chapter six of this work is of particular interest as Na concludes with a section entitled "A Mission Theology of Matthew's Gospel" and interacts with the question: "What is mission?" (Na, 1998: 175).

Two other works that will be helpful are *Mission Shift* by David J. Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer; and *For The Sake Of His Name* by David M. Doran. Though these books consider global mission and not just Malawi, they are excellent examples of studies that have a high view of the Matthean paradigm for modern day mission.

In David Doran's book, a historical comparison is made between modern missions and the Student Volunteer Movement which was formed in the United States in 1888. It was a movement founded by university students who were involved in the YMCA but had a desire for world evangelization. It started with a small group of college students praying on one university campus and then spread to other college campuses and churches. The Student Volunteer Movement hosted large conferences where students were challenged to become missionaries and those who didn't become missionaries were encouraged to support them. Through this one movement, more than 20,000 university students actually became missionaries and 80,000 more dedicated themselves to support those who had sailed. Never before had there been such a large movement in missions among young people and there hasn't been one since.

What may be the most astonishing fact about this movement is not the fact that thousands of missionaries were sent out, but that less than 40 years after the organization began to blossom, it died. In fact, very few Christians today have ever of the Student Volunteer Movement.²

² One of Doran's main reasons for including two chapters about the Student Volunteer movement in the opening of his book, *For The Sake of His Name*, was to familiarize his readers with lessons learned

Doran's book devotes more than forty pages to recounting the history of the Student Volunteer Movement. The purpose for that detailed historical account of the movement was to remind readers today of that movement's downfall and to ask the question, 'Is history being repeated?' (2002: 42). Doran summarizes the premature demise of the Student Volunteer movement by saying:

The pragmatic foundation that the SVM leaders had built upon eventually led to an ecumenical organization – an ecumenical organization like the World Council of Churches – that eventually became completely liberal in its view of the authorship of Scripture and the fundamentals of the faith. The Movement had a fruitful genesis but ended in a theological vacuum, because the original leaders had a pragmatic-based philosophy coupled with poor theological training (2002: 40).

Another author who affirms Doran's deductions about Student Volunteer Movement is Arthur Johnston. Johnston's conclusion about the Student Volunteer Movement is that "those in the youth movements with very little training in evangelical theology were especially vulnerable to a more social approach to the Bible and missions" (1978: 33). According to historical accounts of the Student Volunteer Movement like those mentioned above, the focus of this movement shifted dramatically within a relatively short period of time. Within approximately three decades, an association that was originally formed with a focus to verbal gospel proclamation was transformed into an organization that directed its attention on social action – trying to meet physical needs (like alleviating poverty) as well as social needs (such as eradicating racism). Johnston notes that this fundamental shift in that one movement affected mission work throughout the world as it "dramatically changed the purpose and character of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910" (1978: 33).

As these authors have looked back at this movement, one of the leading reasons given for its expiration was that it did not guard itself from the social gospel. The social gospel was a movement within the church that was more concerned with solving

from the movement. On page 42, Doran begins a section with the heading, "Is History Being Repeated?" It is clear from Doran's chapters that he not only believes that Christians today should be more familiar with the Student Volunteer Movement, but he also believes they should be familiar with lessons to be learned by the failure and collapse of the movement.

problems in society than it was with evangelism. Poverty, race-relations, war, and imperialism were elevated above preaching salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. At the same time, it is possible that the over emphasis of the social gospel was a reaction to a one-sided emphasis on saving souls based on a misunderstanding of the complete context of the Great Commission.

Doran's book relates to this study in that he suggests that a key missing ingredient from the Student Volunteer Movement was that it lacked a commitment to the Great Commission. Doran speaks about the fulfillment of the Great Commission as incomplete 'until there are disciples who continue to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ and bear fruit through Him' (Doran, Johnson, & Eckman, 2002: 108). Naturally, part of that obedience would result in social action. However, because Doran sees a clear and essential connection between Great Commission work and mission, he comes to a bold conclusion that 'all missionaries should be evangelists in the truest sense of the term, preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ calling men and women to repentance and faith in Him' (Doran et Al, 2002: 109).

One noteworthy connection between the Student Volunteer Movement and missionary activity in Malawi is the influence of Donald Fraser's missionary methods in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Donald Fraser was associated with the Student Volunteer movement early on in his missionary career. In fact,

. . . in 1896 he had chaired the Liverpool conference of the Student Volunteer Movement Union [and] . . . his attendance at international conferences, such as the Nashville conference of the American student volunteer movement in March 1906, helped establish him as an international missionary figure (Thompson, 1995: 233).

Many of Fraser's years as a missionary were spent in Northern Malawi, where he was well known for establishing hundreds of village schools that taught basic education skills to Africans. One district in Malawi had more than 120 village schools, and Fraser was criticized for setting up too many schools with low standards of education that were too difficult to manage. Fraser, however, had a belief that setting up general education schools was a means of evangelism. This was a strategy that he defended when he chaired the 1926 Le Zoute conference on the *Christian Mission in Africa*.

This defense resulted in strong criticism from other leaders in the missionary community.

The Anglican missiologist Rolland Allen sharply criticised, and totally rejected, the alliance of missions and government in education, in a book written specifically to challenge the presuppositions of Le Zoute. Rolland Allen argued that missionary societies were not founded to undertake general education work, but to preach the gospel. He accepted the fact that simple village schools had an evangelistic role to play in preparing candidates for baptism, but objected to the whole idea of missionary societies running schools which were primarily educational. In particular, he argued that any cooperation with government in education would be on the government's terms and that their main concern would be the efficiency of secular education. Cooperation with the government, he suggested, would make missions agents of the government and of western civilization. He rejected the inference of Le Zoute that missionaries should become involved in politics to see that justice was done (Thompson, 1995: 252).

Thus, the social justice tendencies linked with the Student Volunteer Movement do have a certain, though somewhat limited, history in Malawi. As one considers the history of the Student Volunteer Movement, other declining missionary movements come to mind that have demonstrated similar deterioration shortly after they started to emphasize social action.

The Methodist Church has a rich history of evangelistic, proclamation missionary activity that includes the British missionary activities in the American colonies, beginning in 1769. The year that they chose to plant churches in America was a difficult time to embark on the mammoth evangelistic task. In his historical account of American Methodism, Barclay notes, "If Wesley had deliberately set himself to choose an inopportune time for planting Methodism in the New World he could have not done better than to fix upon the years immediately preceding the Revolution" (Barclay, 1949: 53). Yet, in spite of less than ideal timing, the movement proved to be immensely successful. They were successful not only in the United States but also throughout the world for the next two hundred years.

However, in the mid 1900s, Methodist missionary activity developed a new emphasis on social action. As early as 1914, Methodists writing began to promote social aspects of mission.

Modern developments have compelled us to revise and enlarge our definition of a missionary. Some of us well remember the conventional idea which was held in our childhood. The missionary was sometimes pictured – in words or wood cut-outs – as a gentleman in a frock-coat, standing under a palm tree, discoursing Western doctrines to Eastern savages . . . That solitary incongruous figure under the palm tree still represents the missionary enterprise to many who fail to realize the immense change brought about by world politics, world commerce, world-consciousness. . . a true picture would show him not only making addresses but digging wells (like John G. Paton in New Hebrides); planting cereals and fruits (like Dr. Robert Moffat in Africa); building ships (like John Williams, building his *Messenger of Peace* in the South Seas), teaching carpentry, blacksmithing, and printing, acting as explorer, engineer, physician, or diplomat (Faunce, 1914: 185-186).

By the mid 1900s social action was beginning to dominate the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) so much that as early as 1954 one of their members, Clifford Cook, suggested that they remove the term *missionary* from their organization's title because it no longer represented who they were. In 1973, the name was finally changed to "Methodist Church Overseas Division, [which] reflected the change in relationship and attitude Cook had reported, now widely shared both in Britain and around the world" (Pritchard, 2014: 217). Pritchard notes that in the late 1900s, regarding financial support of Methodist work overseas,

Grants tended to be made to consolidate and extend work initiated long before by missionaries but now under local control. The emphasis was properly on resource-sharing – human resources (people and their skills), material resources (money and its purchasing power), spiritual resources (prayer and solidarity) – and sharing meant both giving and receiving. This was itself a full and worthwhile agenda but it left aside the call to primary evangelism (2014: 232-233).

According to Pritchard, by 1970, "Methodist responses to world poverty took an increasingly prominent place on the agenda" (2014: 253). Besides declining church attendance and national appointments by Methodist

missionaries, could the increase of the social agenda be one of the reasons why the British missionary movement diminished by nearly 90% from 1967 to 1996?

In 1967 the Prayer Manual listed ‘300 men missionaries, 165 women missionaries and 272 missionaries’ wives’ – a total of 737. Thirty years later there were just 75 mission partners. While terms of service and lay pension provision had improved, the overall cost of mission partners was no longer such a significant element in the budget (Pritchard, 2014: 235).

The Student Volunteer Movement and British Methodism are not isolated examples of tension between advocates of social action and of gospel proclamation. In Hesselgrave and Stetzer’s book, *Mission Shift*, three essays are presented by three missiologists (Charles Van Engen, the late Paul Hiebert, and the late Ralph Winter) demonstrate that the tension is widespread. The three essays are followed by responses from other missiologists and theologians. These essays discuss mission as it has been practiced in the past, as it is practiced currently, and as it may be practiced in the future. There is tension between the views of mission as social action and mission as evangelism even today. This tension is highlighted by pointed statements such as:

... the ‘evangelical task primarily is the preaching of the Gospel, in the interest of individual regeneration by the supernatural grace of God, in such a way that divine redemption can be recognized as the best solution of our problems, individual and social.’ And if societal transformation is not forthcoming as a result of pursuing proclamation as a priority, the problem is not with this priority but with a circumvention of the discipleship process itself (Christopher Little’s response to Winter in Hesselgrave and Stetzer (Eitel, 2010: 216-217)).

Darrel Guder, in his book *Witness to the World*, also emphasizes the primacy and centrality of gospel proclamation. Notice how he uses conditional (*if . . . then*) statements promote evangelism and discipleship-making as an integral part of the gospel:

If...obedience to Christ as his witnesses in the world is our major concern, then the proclamation of the kingdom of God, with all that

means, and the unity of the witnessing community as its tangible expression in the world must be central to us. If Christ calls us to serve him among the poor and the outcasts of the world, then our obedience must be to do just that. If Christ's teaching and actions require of us that we become agents of change in our society, then we must become such agents if we are to obey Christ. Evangelization must be the saying of the whole gospel, or it is itself our most virulent disobedience is not the refusal to proclaim the gospel, but our insistence upon our particular versions of the gospel, which, because of their limitations and dilutions, easily falsify the gospel (1985: 155).

One of the main concerns about missionary movements that prioritize social action to an equal or greater position to gospel proclamation is that genuine and well-meaning concern for those who are suffering might overshadow or even eliminate concern for their spiritual state. The concern is that the *social gospel* movement might reinvent itself in current mission practice.

The 'social gospel' movement of the 1930's and 1940's deemphasized evangelism and stressed social service. This movement was based on the theology that all world religions contain truth about God. Rather than introducing unbelievers to the way of God in Jesus Christ, religious leaders entered into dialogue with those of other religions to learn their truths. These concepts, set forth at the Jerusalem Missionary Conference of 1928, grew out of the social currents of the day rather than from a strong theological anchorage (Van Rheen, 1996: 13).

1.4 Related Biblical Passages in Acts 6

A key biblical text that includes both social action and gospel proclamation is Acts 6. This chapter of Acts began with a problem. At the very time when the church was experiencing exponential growth, there were some in the church who had physical needs which were being neglected. The Greek-speaking widows were being overlooked, and they were not being properly cared for by the leadership.

It was no secret that many Palestinian Jews looked down on those who were Greek-speaking Jews. While the Greek-speaking Jews were from places scattered around the empire (Acts 2:9–11), the Aramaic or Hebrew-speaking Jews were from Palestine. According to Jewish tradition, there was a weekly dole for the Hebrew needy (given

every Friday which consisted of enough money for fourteen meals). There was also a daily distribution for nonresidents and transients (that consisted of food and drink). It seems that in all the growth of the church, a division was being created between these two groups, and Greek-speaking Jewish believers were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food, and evidently the native widows were not. Note how the apostles dealt with this issue: they did not stop the distribution altogether, or respond in any way that showed neglect for the care of the poor in the church. Rather, the apostles tapped into what apparently was an eagerness in church members to care for one another. What the apostles said was: ‘Brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business’ (Acts 6:3).

Acts 6:5 says, ‘The statement found approval with the whole congregation,’ and they chose men who loved the church. This was not done out of a desire for political correctness, but was motivated by the apostles’ desire to see the gospel continue forward. Because the church was eager to care for one another, the church could remain focused on outreach. By refusing to get bogged down in a political turf war, the widows – as well as the men – chose to respond in humility. The result was that the church leaders could remain focused on evangelism. Or, as one commentator has elaborated, the work of the church leaders was “first, to be constantly in prayer . . . [and] second . . . to teach and preach Christ’s gospel” (Kistemaker, 2001: 222). At the same, time the social needs of the widows were attended to.

Thus the leadership of the early church (both the apostles and these first deacons) was actually promoting evangelism by their eagerness to love and serve one another. This is a critical reminder to pastors who are tempted to see any inward focus of the church as a distraction from evangelism. If the church is not harmonious on the inside, evangelism becomes impossible. By serving one another, the church kept on its evangelistic mission.

An obvious priority of the early church leaders included prayer and the preaching of the word. They said, ‘We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word’ (Acts 6:4). For some Bible students, this leadership from the early

church becomes our standard. In order to remain focused on evangelism, the leaders and laity devoted themselves to prayer and preaching. The result of having a church where the congregation genuinely serves one another and where the pastors are focused on their priorities is that the congregation will naturally testify to those who do not follow Christ. If the church leadership has the right focus, then the members of the congregation cannot keep themselves from sharing with neighbors and family members about the changes that are taking place in their lives. There is a peculiar expression in Acts 6:7 that captures this. Luke writes that the word of God ‘kept on spreading.’ It is not just that the Word of God ‘spread,’ but it ‘kept on spreading’ (continuously, actively). Luke is communicating that the proclaimed Word was being preached in wider and wider areas of the Jerusalem community as a result of the apostles’ decision to focus on prayer and preaching.

When the word of God is clearly and faithfully proclaimed, and the seeds of the gospel fall on fertile soil, then it cannot help but to grow and spread. What is amazing about this gospel growth is that it happens through the God-ordained means of preaching and prayer. It is a growth that cannot be faked or falsely stimulated, and often yields unexpected results. For example, in Jerusalem ‘a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith’ (Acts 6:7). This was certainly the least likely group in Israel to be converted, and yet astonishingly many of them were saved. Note these comments from David Williams:

. . . in a context of prayer and a spirit of good will, the church put its house in order. Unity was maintained. The impression is given that the resolution of this matter brought renewed blessing—the word of God spread; that is, the apostolic preaching of Christ was heard by more and more people, and consequently the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly (1990: 120).

This kind of unexpected salvation is the direct result of the faithful preaching of God’s Word, and these salvations continue even today. As genuine believers grow in their understanding of the Bible and the gospel, they will naturally grow in their love for one another and in their desire to reach the different groups and kinds of people, including those who are perceived as the lost, with the good news of salvation from the wrath of God. Acts 6 is a good example of the early church dealing creatively

with the tension between social action and gospel proclamation. Though these social needs were all within the church body, the church leaders did not neglect social needs. At the same time, they kept the priorities of church leadership focused on prayer and proclamation of the word.

It is important to keep Acts 6:7 in mind when considering the issue of priorities in the local church. Those who see proclamation as a priority for the church emphasize the fact that it is the *Word of God* that continues to increase which results in the multiplication of disciples. This priority of proclamation for the church is derived from passages such as Matthew 28:18-20 which emphasizes teaching and baptism as key elements of disciple-making. Others, who do not see proclamation as a priority for the church differentiate between the priorities for church leaders and the priorities for the church as a whole. For example, commenting on Acts 6, Christopher J.H. Wright says “it is a distortion of this text to use it to suggest that the preaching of the Word has primacy and priority *for the church as a whole in its mission*, as over against all forms of social or compassionate service for the needy” (2010: 214). Wright sees the mission for the church as patterned after the mission of God from both the Old and New Testaments.³

1.5 Related Biblical Passages in Acts 14

Acts 14:1-7 is another example from the book of Acts that relates to this study. However, in this passage, the context involves direct missionary work. Paul and Barnabas had been sent out from their church in Antioch (Syria) to do the work that the Holy Spirit had called them to do (Acts 13:2). This work was a work of gospel proclamation and they took along John Mark to assist them. Some may suggest that John Mark was the first ‘support missionary’ since it appears that he was not involved in proclamation to the extent that Paul and Barnabas were. However, the argument can be made that John Mark served as a ‘missionary-in-training’ as well as a ‘support missionary.’ F.F. Bruce notes that during the infamous dispute over John Mark

³ David J. Bosch would be in agreement with Wright as they both see the over arching pattern for mission as *God’s mission* or *Missio Dei*. As Bosch has written to describe this concept, “mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God . . . Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission” (1991: 390).

between Paul and Barnabas that “Barnabas in particular discerned in him [John Mark] qualities which could be developed and profitably exercised in the Christian mission” (1977: 161).

These early missionaries traveled to Cyprus. They started proclaiming the gospel on the east side of that island (Salamis) and traveled through to Paphos, on the west side. From there they traveled to Perga (southern Turkey), where John Mark deserted them. They then traveled 160 kilometers north by means of a treacherous path to Antioch Pisidia, where they experienced persecution. Moving away from the persecution, they traveled another 130 kilometers to Iconium. This is the setting for their ministry in Acts 14.

In this passage there are five details about the mission work of Paul and Barnabas that will help bring understanding to the focus of their mission. These are five events that commonly occurred on Paul’s mission trips.

1.5.1 Their Mission Began with Proclamation (Acts 14:1a)

As they had done in Pisidian Antioch, the first place that they went was the synagogue. This was both necessary and practical. It was necessary because the gospel was intended for the Jews first and then for the Gentiles. It was practical, because if they had gone to the Gentiles first, the Jews would have wanted nothing to do with them. The primary means that they used to communicate the gospel is significant and noteworthy. They spoke publicly about Jesus. Their mission work did not begin with social action with the Jews, nor did it begin with social action for the Gentiles. It began with proclamation of the gospel.

This is a pattern in their mission work. Previously in Acts 13:5 it says, “When they reached Salamis, they *began* to proclaim the word of God...” (NASB, 1995)⁴. When Paul arrived in Pisidian Antioch, and was asked to share in the synagogue, Acts 13:16 says, “Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, ‘Men of Israel, and you who

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures quoted will be from the New American Standard Updated Edition (1995).

fear God, listen” After they left Iconium and visited other cities, Acts 14:7 says “they continued to preach the gospel.”

This pattern of proclamation continues in the New Testament Epistles where there is a strong emphasis on proclamation. In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul says that Christ sent him to “preach the gospel.” 1 Corinthians 1:18 says, “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 says, “For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified.” Romans 10:17 says, “So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

Preaching is the first event that commonly occurred on Barnabas and Paul’s mission trips. Their involvement with proclamation, however, often led to other results.

1.5.2 Their Mission Resulted in Polarization (Acts 14:1b-2, 4)

To say that people were polarized after the messages of Paul and Barnabas, is simply another way of saying that they were divided. People who heard the messages of these early missionaries found themselves gravitating towards different theological poles. Acts 14:1 says “a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.” But at the other extreme, Acts 14:2 says, “the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren.” Acts 14:4 adds, “But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.” There was rarely anyone standing on middle ground after hearing a message from Paul; the people were polarized.

One of the reasons why the gospel proclaimed was so polarizing was because it not only sent out a message of ‘good news,’ to those who believed it, but it also sent out a message of bad news to those who did not. The good news for those who believed on the name of Christ and repented of their sins was news of forgiveness and eternal life. The bad news for those who refused to repent and trust in Christ’s work on the cross and His righteousness is that there would be no salvation for them. The early message of the apostles was clear, “for there is no other name under heaven given among men

whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus Himself had proclaimed “unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

1.5.3 Their Mission Involved the Planting of Churches (Acts 14:3)

The word “So” at the beginning of Acts 14:3 indicates that in spite of the fact that there were those who were “stirring up” people against them, “they remained a long time.” In fact, by God’s grace, they got bolder. Notice that they spoke boldly “with reliance upon the Lord.” The Lord’s hand was upon them, and they were able to be even bolder about Jesus Christ and they stayed longer. The reason they stayed longer was to help establish a church. This reality is confirmed further on in Acts 14:

Acts 14:21-23 – “After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

The above passage speaks of appointing elders in every church (including Iconium). This confirms that these early missionaries were consistently involved in church planting. “The reference to ‘disciples’ and to ‘elders’ that were appointed by Paul and Barnabas during their return journey (Acts 14:21-23) implies that a community of believers has been established in Iconium” (Schnabel, 2008: 85). Rodger E. Hedlund refers to church planting as the “the heart of Paul’s strategy.” He continues, “Paul’s ministry resulted in churches. He left behind congregations equipped to care for their own needs and to join him in missionary outreach as well” (Hedlund, 1991: 218).

Acts 14 is an excellent place to examine a normative New Testament portrayal of mission because verse 3 says that Paul “was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” Some may look at that and say, “Ah hah, there is the social action. Paul and Barnabas were healing the sick. They were caring for the physical needs of the people as well as the spiritual.”

While it is true that Paul and Barnabas surely cared for those who were suffering, and while it is true that believers today should care for the needs of those suffering around them, in Acts 14 it is clear that for Paul and Barnabas, social action was not an equal goal alongside proclamation. This passage does not focus on social action. The main emphasis of this passage is the proclamation of the gospel and teaching people about Christ. It is about speaking boldly, even when people are against you. As Allen states, the influence of these miracles was not “in attracting converts as great as we often suppose . . . at Iconium signs and wonders were a witness to the truth of the Gospel” (1962: 42). The signs and wonders were the Lord’s way of testifying that His gospel (“the word of His grace” v. 3) was truly His message. This is why the New International Version translates verse 3 by saying that the Lord “confirmed the message of his grace, granting signs and wonders” (NIV, 2011). The New King James Version says the Lord was “bearing witness to the word of His grace” (NKJV, 1982). God confirmed the words that were being spoken by Paul and Barnabas.

The book of Hebrews also mentions that signs and wonders were used in apostolic times for confirmation purposes:

Hebrews 2:3-4 – “How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

1.5.4 The Mission Often Resulted in Persecution (Acts 14:5)

The Jews from Acts 14:2 had stirred up the unbelieving Gentiles in Iconium so much that after some time the tension exploded into an episode where some hurled rocks at Paul and Barnabas. They were trying to kill Paul and Barnabas. In Acts 14:5, it says that “an attempt” was made to stone Paul and Barnabas. Evidently, this attempt was a serious enough threat to cause them to move on. Furthermore, the animosity expressed by those attempting to stone them was not in any way diminished upon the departure of Paul and Barnabas. In Acts 14:19 it is revealed that these same Jews

from Iconium followed Paul and Barnabas to Lystra where they stoned Paul so severely that they assumed he was dead.

Even the narrative about persecution highlights proclamation. It was proclamation that had brought on the persecution. Paul and Barnabas had such a high view of God's sovereignty that it didn't matter what dangers they faced. They were focused on their mission: preaching Christ to the lost and helping to establish churches that would in turn preach Christ.

1.5.5 The Mission Included Progression to Another Place (Acts 14:6-7)

Paul's regular pattern of ministry was to keep on preaching and teaching about Christ until he was forced to move on. "Would the missionaries have moved on quickly if people did not respond positively to the gospel? This is possible, but not very likely" (Schnabel, 2008: 265). Their goal was to glorify God by proclaiming Christ leading to the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles. Eventually, he returned to his sending church to report (Acts 14:27-28). The focus of these early missions was proclamation and ongoing discipleship through the creation of healthy churches.

1.6 Related Biblical Passages in Ephesians 4

One passage in the Epistles that is relevant to the issues surrounding social action and gospel proclamation is Ephesians 4:10-13. It has been noted that Ephesians 4 is a key passage for the focus of church ministry that helps church leaders from being pulled away from other activities such as social action. As one theologian has noted:

In Ephesians 4 we have the most mature statement in the New Testament concerning the "official ministry." Here Paul speaks of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (v. 11). He then describes their work as being "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (v. 12) . . . In the light of the doctrine of the priesthood of believers it would seem that the central integrating principle around which the preacher's ministry is to be built is to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry." At the present time the minister is pulled asunder by the overwhelming and sometimes conflicting demands made upon him. He is to preach. He is to evangelize. He is to engage in social action. He is

to administer. He is to visit. He is to counsel. Etc. For the minister to undertake to carry out all these demands alone is impossible from the human perspective and erroneous from the biblical perspective (Edge, 1963: 12-13).

Ephesians 4:12 speaks about “the equipping of the saints for the work of service.” The question is: How do church leaders equip other believers for the work of service and is there a normative theme of proclamation to equip them? Or, does the normative model that Paul lays out for the Ephesians involve social action on the part of the church leader? If Paul’s instructions for the church leaders in Ephesus focus on traditional prioritism ministry, then it will serve well as a normative model for mission.

In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul identifies three links for the church that emphasize the priority of the proclamation ministry, both for pastors and missionaries (evangelists). He first identifies Christ’s provision for the church. Secondly, Paul speaks about Christ’s progression for the church. He then identifies Christ’s purpose for the church.

1.6.1 Christ’s Provision for the Church (Ephesians 4:11)

In Ephesians 4:11, Paul writes about four offices that Christ has provided for the church. Christ gave “some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” Two of these offices are foundational for the church. As Harold Hoehner has written, “. . . the church’s foundation consists of apostles and prophets and the main stone of the foundation is the cornerstone, Christ himself” (2002: 404). Many commentators view the offices of apostles of prophets in Ephesians 4:11 to be offices in a *restricted* sense. That is to say that the offices of apostles and prophets are no longer being practiced in the same way that they have been in the past because the apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church (O’Brien, 1999: 298, Hoehner, 2002: 542). Paul has already explained what their roles were in Ephesians 2:19-20. The apostles and the prophets that Paul wrote of had among other responsibilities, the task of laying the foundation for the church. This *foundational* role was carried out as the authoritative recipients and proclaimers of the mystery of Christ.

The picture of foundation laying in Ephesians 2:20-22 is that the readers, those who are redeemed by Christ's work on the cross, are the bricks (vv. 21-22) that are being fitted together on top of a foundation. That has already been completed. Christ is the cornerstone (v. 21) and the building is now "being fitted together." Hoehner suggests this as the most likely interpretation:

The aorist passive participle ἐποικοδομηθέντες may signify a temporal idea, indicating that the readers of this letter have already built on the foundation at the time of their conversion, or, more likely, it may denote cause, namely, the reason we are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household is because we have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (2002: 397).

Besides these two foundational positions that Paul has mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, Paul identifies two other positions that God has given to the church which do remain today. Paul speaks of evangelists and pastor-teachers. Evangelists are those who proclaim the good news, especially in areas that have not yet heard the gospel. In Acts 21:8, Phillip is called an evangelist. In II Timothy 4:5, Timothy is told to "do the work of an evangelist." By examining Phillip and Timothy's work, one discovers that the New Testament evangelists were actually more like today's missionaries and church planters than they were like today's evangelists who hold crusades and revivals. As John MacArthur has clearly articulated:

Phillip demonstrates that the evangelist is not a man with ten suits and ten sermons who runs a road show. New Testament evangelists were missionaries and church planters (much like the apostles, but without the title and miraculous gifts), who went where Christ was not named and led people to faith in the Savior. They then taught the new believers the Word, built them up, and moved on to new territory (1986: 143).

Timothy is also a good example of this because part of doing the "work of an evangelist" for him meant that he was identified with a local church and was involved in a prolonged pastoral ministry. He helped to establish elders and dealt with problems in the church (like false doctrine, disorder in worship, and materialism). Timothy's work also included preaching and explaining the true gospel.

The fourth position that God has given to the church as a gift is the office of pastor-teacher. Some desire to separate this into two offices, but both the context and the structure of the verse seem to imply that it is one office.⁵ Even among many church members, one might hear this office being separated. A church member might say of his pastor, “He is a good teacher, but he is not a very good pastor.” Or another might say, “He is a good pastor, but he is not a very good teacher.” While it may be true that not every teacher is a pastor, all pastors should also be good teachers. The word “pastor” means “shepherd.” Imagine hiring a shepherd boy out in a rural area to look after sheep. If he was very loving, affectionate and a real protector, but never fed them, would he be a good shepherd? The same is true for pastors. If they neglect to feed their flocks the word of God, they cannot be good pastors.

This is significant for this study because the role of the missionary (evangelist) in Ephesians 4:11, when understood by the examples of Phillip (Acts 21) and Timothy (II Timothy 4), is very similar to the role of a pastor. Both evangelists and pastor-teachers were primarily involved in proclamation ministry. A key difference between them is that evangelists like Phillip and Timothy primarily ministered in places where the gospel had not yet been established, whereas pastors typically ministered among congregations that were already established. If pastors cannot be good pastors unless they are involved in the proclamation of the Word, can missionaries be good missionaries if they are not involved in the proclamation of the Word? Paul gives us more information about this. He does not merely list these two offices in Ephesians 4, he also answers *why* Christ made those provisions. Why did Christ give evangelists and pastor-teachers to the church?

1.6.2 Christ’s Progression for the Church (Ephesians 4:12)

⁵ Hoehner has an in-depth discussion of this issue (2002: 544). Some hold that the grammatical construction of one article followed by two plural nouns which are separated by a *kai* indicates a certain distinction. Wallace, for example, holds that in such cases the first is the subset of the second—meaning in this case that, “all pastors are to be teachers, though not all teachers are to be pastors” (Wallace, 1996: 284). This researcher agrees with Wallace. Hoehner, however, has a beneficial word of caution. He repeatedly reminds his readers that Paul is writing in Ephesians 4:11 about “gifts and not offices.” One must be cautious not to make too much out of titles and offices when giftings are in mind.

Paul is clear in providing the reason for why Christ gave evangelists and pastor-teachers to the church. He teaches in Ephesians 4:13 that the purpose for the church is unity in faith and an intimate relationship with Christ. But verse 12 of Ephesians 4 contains three vital links between verse 11 and verse 13. Paul started with Christ's provision for the church (v. 11 – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers). Paul ends with Christ's purpose for the church. But how should the church get from provision to purpose? The answer is found in the three links of verse 12, the progression for the church.

The three links that tie together God's provision and God's purpose are: 1) The evangelists and pastors prepare, 2) the saints serve, and 3) the body is built up. Verse 12 consists of three clauses that correspond with each link in this progression. The first clause (or link) in verse 12 is, "for the equipping of the saints." This is the responsibility of the evangelists (missionaries) as well as the pastor-teachers of the church. They prepare others for service. If Phillip and Timothy are quintessential examples of New Testament missionaries, then where would one find the idea that a missionary does not need to be primarily involved in proclamation of the Word? How do evangelists and pastor-teachers equip others in the church?

As has been stated, missionaries and pastors have many similar responsibilities. Both pray for the flock, guard the flock, minister to the sick, and counsel those whose hearts are hurting. But at the top of the list, the missionaries and pastors can serve a congregation most by teaching them God's Word. It is God's Word that is going to change lives. II Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." In John 15:3, Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." God's Word cleanses, God's Word completes, God's Word changes lives and prepares people for His service. This is why the word "teacher" is so closely tied to the word "pastor" in Ephesians 4:11. Evangelists and pastors do need to be able to counsel those who are hurting (as all Christians should). Evangelists and pastors need to pray for the church (as all Christians should). Evangelists and pastors need to visit and pray for the sick (as all Christians should). But a unique way that

evangelists (missionaries) and pastors can serve a people, is to prepare nourishing food from the Word. That is accomplished by being devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word. This is the first link between God's provision and his purpose: the evangelists and pastors prepare the people through prayer and teaching.

The second link is the response from those that have been prepared. Ephesians 4:12 teaches that the saints are equipped "for the work of ministry." This includes social action. This middle section of the middle link is the natural byproduct of proclamation ministry. The church is not to be a place where a few ministers do the work of the Lord, and everyone else watches. It is a place where every member is a minister. Ephesians 4:16 speaks of Christ, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." The reason why churches can minister in communities and have a significant impact is because every believer has a unique spiritual gift, given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ uses the foundations of the faith (laid by the prophets and apostles) which, when proclaimed by evangelists, and continually taught by pastors, prepares the body for ministry. The key here is that works of service (including social action type work) is not left out of the picture; it just doesn't occupy the primary attention of evangelists (missionaries) and pastors in Ephesians 4:11-13.

When the gifted men are faithful in prayer and in teaching the Word, the people will be properly equipped and rightly motivated to do the work of service. From the saints who are equipped God raises up elders, deacons, teachers, and every other kind of worker needed for the church to be faithful and productive. Spiritual service is the work of *every* Christian, *every* saint of God. Attendance is a poor substitute for participation in ministry (MacArthur, 1986: 155).

The third link in the progression of the church is building up the body of Christ. This also involves certain gifts that members of the body of Christ have. As Hoehner writes,

Christ gave foundational gifts to the church for the immediate purpose of preparing all the saints for the goal of service and in turn, this service is for the final goal of building up the body of Christ. As each

believer functions with the gift given to each, Christ's body, the church, will be built up (2002: 551).

Thus, preaching and teaching ministry equips Christians to edify one another by using their spiritual gifts. Though it appears that the primary focus of using their gifts is to build up others within the body of Christ, certain gifts (for example, the gift of serving or the gift of mercy, both mentioned in Romans 12:7-8) would naturally be used to reach out to the needs of those outside the church. This would align well with Galatians 6:10 which says, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Together, these three links (the evangelists and pastors prepare; the saints serve; and the body is built up) tie together Christ's gifts for the church with His ultimate purpose for the church.

1.6.3 Christ's Purpose for the Church (Ephesians 4:13)

Ephesians 4:13 speaks about Christ's purpose: "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." God is glorified when His church is strengthened, united with Christ, and intimate with Christ. The byproducts of that are that church members are close to one another and mature. The ultimate targets for the church are for the church to be unified and have a close relationship with Christ.

The following lengthy comment on the relationship between Ephesians 4:12 and Ephesians 4:13 within the context of missions and evangelism is worth reading in full:

When verse 13 is considered in the light of the preceding verses it becomes clear that what the apostle has in mind is this, that the entire church—consisting not only of apostles, prophets, evangelists, "pastors and teachers," but of all others besides—should be faithful to its calling of rendering service, with a view to the upbuilding of the body of Christ, so that true, spiritual unity and growth may be promoted. Note "we all." There is no room in Christ's church for drones, only for busy bees. To the Thessalonians the apostle had said, "For we hear that some among you are conducting themselves in a disorderly manner, not busy workers but busybodies" (2 Thess. 3:11). Paul sharply rebuked that attitude. It is exactly *unity* that is promoted when all become busily engaged in the affairs of the church and when each member eagerly renders service for which the Lord has equipped him.

Thus, it has happened repeatedly that young people began to be imbued with enthusiasm when they engaged in this or that church program. For example, the Board of Home Missions of a certain denomination launches a *S(ummer) W(orkshop) I(n) M(issions)* program. This program requires of the young people who are in it that at different places throughout the country for several weeks during the summer they not only receive special instruction in the aims and methods of missions but also make contact with those who have not been previously reached for Christ. They bring the message, teach, and organize various social and religious activities. They are not afraid to live for a while in a slum district in close and beneficial contact with the community. How the eyes of these young people sparkle upon their return, for they have a story to tell, and are far more aglow with interest in Christ and his church than ever before. Often the contacts made during the summer are continued by means of correspondence and return visits. Also, the young people's societies and the congregations that have taken part in sponsoring the program, having become thus involved, receive an added blessing when the young witnesses bring their reports. Thus, unity has been promoted, a unity of faith in Christ and of knowledge—not just intellectual but heart-knowledge—of the Lord and Savior, who, because of his majesty and greatness, is here called “the Son of God” (Hendriksen & Kistemaker, 1973: 198-199)

In J.I. Packer's book, *Knowing God*, he said, “...knowing God is a matter of personal dealing....knowing God is more than knowing about Him; it is a matter of dealing with Him as He opens up to you.... the width of our knowledge about him is no gauge of the depth of our knowledge of him.” (1973: 100). Ultimately, the church is built up internally as all believers are nurtured to fruitful service through the Word. This results in God's purposes of unity and intimacy with Christ – a genuine knowledge of Him. This then brings glory to His name. But the primary works in the first link that lead to the second link and result in the third link are ministries of proclamation.

1.7 Research Aim and Hypothesis

This study explores and evaluates the factors (independent variables, e.g., education in general, theological education, denominational ties, presuppositions about evangelism and social action), which have influenced how missionaries deal with the tension between evangelism and social action in their practices in Malawi. Evangelism and social action are two of the main dependent variables that determine outcomes of missionary thinking and practice.

These variables help to formulate the questions and hypothesis of this study. The main research question that requires quantitative research is: What are the current models of missionary practice among missionaries in Malawi today? The main research question that requires qualitative research is: How do current missionary models in Malawi relate to key passages for missionaries, such as Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 25:31-46? Some of the sub-questions which guide the conceptualization and operationalization of evangelism and social gospel in the structured questionnaire are: How do missionaries understand and relate evangelism and social action? What are the possible consequences of those perspectives? How do the sending churches and their missionaries understand the primary goal of mission? What are missionaries concentrating most of their time on in Malawi? Do they focus more on evangelism or social action? Why? If missionaries focus more on evangelism or social action, how do they integrate dimensions from the other practice? What should be the primary activity of a missionary?

In the process of exploring the data, the study tests a hypothesis that is built on two main premises:

Premise 1 – The conceptualization of missionary work has changed in Malawi. In previous generations, mission work in Malawi typically focused on local churches. Missionaries were either planting new churches or strengthening existing churches.⁶ Today, it appears as though missionaries in Malawi participate in a variety of activities. Pastors, doctors, maintenance workers, translators, school teachers, farmers, orphanage care-givers, food-service personnel, and youth-camp leaders all may refer to themselves as ‘missionaries.’ There is no problem with them using the term missionary (for the term comes from the Latin (*mitto*) and simply means *sent one*). But the issue remains, if missionaries are more focused on mission as social action rather than on mission as evangelism in Malawi – why is that?

⁶ As one missiologist has written, “From the beginning of Missions from America, Christian missions of almost every stripe have concerned themselves with a variety of ministries designed to meet the physical, social, and educational needs of people around the world. Traditionally, most missions have usually thought of these missions as ‘secondary,’ ‘supporting,’ or ‘related.’ Priority has been given to preaching the gospel, winning people to Christ, and growing responsible churches” (Hesselgrave, 2005: 118)

Premise 2 – Great Commission work involves baptism and teaching and is an essential element in mission. In his book, *Transforming Mission*, Bosch argues that “Matthew’s entire gospel can only be understood from the perspective of the final pericope. The same is true of Luke’s gospel” (Bosch, 1991: 91). With such an emphasis on these final words, and their application to mission, why is it that baptism and teaching seem to be neglected by many who practice mission as social action? Is it possible that a major contributing factor to the suspected neglect of baptism and teaching on the part of missionaries is because they are expecting established churches to take on that responsibility? For a measure of understanding on this, the relationships and perceptions between current missionaries and churches present in Malawi today need to be researched empirically.

Hypothesis – If theological and contextual factors cause missionary practice in Malawi to neglect evangelism, baptism, and teaching and to focus primarily on social and developmental issues, missionaries will have negative effects on the church in Malawi and perhaps on sending churches abroad. These effects have the potential to be negative because the church in Malawi would find itself competing with para-church organizations set up by missionaries. An even greater effect in Malawi is that the church would be influenced by a de-emphasis on baptism and teaching and the church itself may become uninterested in evangelism. Furthermore, the sending churches could potentially be sending missionaries to Malawi to help fulfill the Great Commission and the result may be that two key elements of that commission are being neglected.

This study is limited in its scope in that it focuses primarily on Protestant missionaries. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder have noted that while Protestants and Catholics agree on many issues surrounding the missionary nature of the church, there are still significant differences. For example, they part company “in the way that Christ’s salvation is granted” (2004: 326). Though in recent years, a number of Protestant leaders have made declarations stating that there should be less division

and distinction between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics⁷, there still remains a significant number of Protestants who do not accept Roman Catholicism's soteriology⁸. This being a study that explores the tensions between proclamation of the gospel and social action's role in the gospel, the researcher decided to exclude the Roman Catholic missionaries in Malawi from the quantitative research. This was done not because there is no interest in Roman Catholicism by some Protestants, but merely because if this study had included both Protestants and Roman Catholics together, the data may have not been accepted by both conservative Evangelical theologians and liberal Catholic theologians because of their differences.

1.8 Methodology

Since the study explores and tests a particular hypothesis to evaluate missiological aspects of evangelism and social gospel in the thinking and practice of missionaries, a quantitative methodology informed by a theological-hermeneutical framework is appropriate. In terms of the method, the researcher provides a theological study of current missiological scholarship that deals with evangelism and social developmental issues. The theological study informs the construction of the empirical studies. A survey of missionaries – namely interviews which are based on a structured questionnaire, assists the researcher in gathering empirical data. Regarding the quantitative study of missionaries in Malawi, the study will be based on a stratified random sample of missionaries in Malawi. The goal is to represent the practices of the missionary population in Malawi and draw broader conclusions.

In addition to field survey work in Malawi, this doctoral study includes an interview for Western Christians in focus groups that have an interest in missionary work in Malawi. The purpose of this field research will be to determine the broad correlations

⁷ Bevans and Schroeder refer to the document, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," as an example of common agreement between Evangelicals and Catholics. However, it is also noted by Bevans and Schroeder that this was in "no way an official event" and the document was formed by "relatively liberal Evangelical theologians and relatively conservative Catholic theologians" (2004: 326).

⁸ Again, according to Bevans and Schroeder, "For Evangelicals, one is 'lost' if one does not have explicit knowledge of and make and act of explicit faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. For Catholics, God's Spirit works in 'ways known only to God' to lead women and men of sincerity and good will to a participation in paschal mystery" (2004:326).

between what missionaries do in the field and the understanding of mission and criteria for mission from the Christians in the West.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses is performed: analyzing the data, constructing models [e.g., model 1 - the relation between levels of theological education (independent variable) and the preference for evangelism or social gospel (dependent variables); model 2- theological education and denominational affiliation (independent variables) and evangelisms or social gospel] to test the hypothesis, interpreting and evaluating the results in terms of the missiological-hermeneutical framework. In short, the data is cleaned and described to discern what kind of analysis is possible and then outline the patterns in missionary thinking and practice. Thereafter, inferences about the overall understanding and thinking of the missionary population in Malawi will be made from the random sample.

Various authors have suggested different levels of analysis that can be used to assess the validity of a hypothesis. These levels typically move from identifying a testable proposition and then using quantitative and qualitative research methods to determine the findings (Seale, 2012: 36). Tobias Faix proposes a cycle that moves from discovery (involving planning and formulation), to justification (involving conceptualization, data collection, and data analysis), and ends with application (interpretation) (2008: 117-118). Richard Osmer suggests a spiral that keeps returning to the tasks of descriptive empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic (2008:11). What these authors all have in common is that they begin with observations, move on to research questions and end with responses.

In this research project, the researcher follows a similar pattern in his research methodology. He begins with the observation that missionaries in Malawi tend to be more involved with social action than gospel proclamation. He then uses a quantitative survey to determine what the current models of missionary practice are among missionaries in Malawi today (Chapter 3). Along with that, he does a qualitative theological study of Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 25:31-46 (Chapter 2) and a qualitative study involving focus groups from the west (Chapter 4). The quantitative study is designed to explore the patterns and dynamics of mission work

among missionaries in Malawi. The focus groups are designed to explore how students in the West understand and construct what it means to be a missionary.

The researcher introduces normative aspects in chapters one and two. In fact, throughout chapters two, three and four the researcher discusses the normative aspects considering biblical-theological perspectives and different theological and missiological orientations of mission and social action. Chapters five and six further discuss these normative aspects as well as propose responses and solutions to questions such as, what should the ideal relationship between mission and social action be?

1.9 Ethics

Each participant in the quantitative survey as well as the qualitative focus groups signed an informed consent form (see ANNEXURE C and D). The participants were informed of the topic, purpose and procedures of the study. All participants remain anonymous in this study, however a complete list of participants is kept in a password protected file with the researcher. Participants were also provided with contact details for both the researcher and the academic advisor for this project.

Regarding the focus groups, the groups involved participants who were seminary students with an interest in missionary work in Malawi. The groups met when the researcher served as adjunct professor at the seminary where the participants attended. However, these groups were not part of a class that the researcher was teaching as the researcher was teaching another course that was unrelated to this study during the semester that the focus groups met. Students were not motivated to participate in the focus groups because of any grade or other material benefit that the researcher might have been able to provide for them. The researcher simply served as a guest lecturer in these small group meetings. The advantages of involving seminary students as participants included the fact that the participants had a high level of biblical knowledge as well as an expressed interest in missionary work.

1.10 Chapter Outline

Following the introductory chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 2 categorizes the tension between the practices of proclamation and social action in mission. Three positions of missionary practice are introduced and these positions form a grid against which current missionary practices in Malawi can be measured. In addition to an introduction of these three positions, a theological study is carried out on Matthew 28:18-20 as well as Matthew 25:31-46. This study helps the reader to see how key biblical passages relate to the various missionary practices in Malawi.

In Chapter 3, some survey data from an empirical quantitative study is presented and interpreted. This survey was conducted in Malawi to more than one hundred missionaries. The purpose of the survey is to 1) ascertain what missionaries are doing in Malawi, 2) discover their understanding and commitment to the Great Commission passage of Matthew 28:19-20, and 3) determine whether each missionary is primarily involved in gospel proclamation mission or social action mission.

Chapter 4 conveys insights gained from focus groups in the United States. These focus groups involve seminary students with an interest in missionary work in Malawi. Each focus group discussion was audibly recorded and then transcribed. The data from these transcriptions is then processed and interpreted manually. Certain common perceptions, understandings, expectations, concerns, and definitions are observed in this study.

The data from chapters 2, 3, and 4 are triangulated in Chapter 5 and certain observations are noted. Seven key reasons are suggested as contributing factors to the differing views among missionaries in Malawi regarding the priority of gospel proclamation. These seven key reasons are revisited in Chapter 6 where solutions are suggested to the problems revealed in Chapter 5. Also in Chapter 6, a section is included that considers how liberation theology, liberal theology, and conservative theology view the problems and solutions differently.

Chapter 7 brings forth certain conclusions. The contribution of this study to the field of missiology and practical theology is revisited as well as some suggestions for

further research. The researcher then closes the dissertation with some final remarks. After the bibliography, the researcher includes several helpful annexures including a copy of the quantitative survey from Chapter 3 and a full sample transcript from one of the focus group interviews from Chapter 4. Other items in the Annexure section are certain copies of ethical release forms and correspondence Malawi Immigration office which provided a list of all religious workers in Malawi. This list was used as the basis for the randomly selected participants for the quantitative survey from Chapter 3.

1.11 Contributions of the Study

This doctoral study is expected to make a significant contribution to missionary work in Malawi. Missionaries in Malawi can be provided with original survey data that will help them to learn more about the broader scope of missionary activity in Malawi. Not only will it help missionaries who desire to stay focused on carrying out the Great Commission, but it is expected that churches that become aware of this study should not neglect to send out and support missionaries that do represent them in carrying out the Great Commission. It is also expected that this study should help churches understand the tension between different approaches to mission and assist those who are confused about the definition of mission and its relationship to the Great Commission.

There is an ongoing debate among those who attend the Lausanne conferences (and among others) regarding the relationship between evangelism and social action. For example, even one of the early architects of Lausanne has explained that paragraph five of the Lausanne Covenant “expresses penitence ‘both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive’” (Stott, 1975: 290).

Though this researcher is not under the illusion that his research will eradicate all tension between those who practice evangelism and social concern in mutually exclusive ways, this study can still contribute significantly to Christian mission in Malawi and worldwide. Specifically, the empirical results in conjunction with a

proper understanding of the Great Commission should help missionaries in Malawi to avoid unbalanced tendencies.

Furthermore, this study hopes to provide eye-opening information to churches that are sending missionaries and may not be aware of unbalanced tendencies. As Jaques Matthey has noted, there is a “tendency to reduce mission to involvement in the field of social work, accompanied by acts of worship and programmes of Christian education [that is] still dominant in many traditional churches” (2007: 356).

This study provides an empirical and theological lens that will clarify what mission work should be theoretically and practically. It also provides a valid and representative research of missionary thinking and practice in Malawi – what is actually happening on the ground. Lastly, it makes a particular contribution to quantitative research, particularly hypothesis testing, in the subfields of mission theology and mission practice in Africa.

CHAPTER 2: CATEGORIZATION OF THE TENSION BETWEEN PROCLAMATION AND SOCIAL ACTION IN MISSION

2.1 Introduction: A Spectrum of Positions on Missionary Practice

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce and analyze various positions related to missionary practice. There is great tension among many of the writings and practices relating to mission. On one end of the spectrum, a writer might dominate his writing about mission with the idea of verbal proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the other end of the spectrum, the idea of social action towards the poor and needy might dominate another's writing on this same subject. Lesslie Newbigin has recognized this tension and he is able to describe it masterfully:

On the one hand, there are those who place exclusive emphasis on the winning of individuals to conversion, baptism, and church membership. . . The primary task is evangelism, the direct preaching of the gospel in words – spoken or written. . . The preaching of the gospel of salvation from sin and of the offer of eternal life is the primary business of the church. On the other hand, there are those who condemn this as irrelevant or wrong. The gospel, they will say, is about God's kingdom, God's reign over all nations and all things. The central responsibility of the Church . . . is to seek the doing of God's will of righteousness and peace in this world. (1989: 135)

In other words, among those who write and practice mission, there is a spectrum of positions in relation to verbal proclamation and social action. It is important to note that a desirable term to describe the various positions is 'spectrum' for the simple reason that various colors in a spectrum bleed into one another. Some individuals may prefer not to be placed into a 'box' or a specific theological position. Some individuals may demonstrate signs of belonging to more than one position. Therefore, the separation between one's position in practice may not be as easy to differentiate as it is on paper. However, it is clear that (though the lines of division may not be easy to define) at least three major positions are held in both practice and theory.

In his 2005 work, missiologist, David J. Hesselgrave has suggested three titles that categorize the dominant positions relating to social action and gospel proclamation today among evangelicals.⁹ His categories include traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism. These three categories provide a coherent axis that will form a grid from which one can evaluate various issues relating to social action and gospel proclamation. These issues include a summary of each position and how the positions relate to key biblical passages, hermeneutics, and the Lausanne Congresses on World Evangelization.

2.2 Position 1: Traditional Prioritism

Traditional prioritism “. . . sustains the time-honored distinction between the primary mission of the church and secondary or supporting missions . . . With reference to social action and evangelism, it gives priority to evangelism” (Hesselgrave, 2005: 957). One common misunderstanding about traditional prioritism is that it is thought to negate social action altogether. But this is not the case.

Traditional prioritism recognizes the importance of all or most of those ministries that address the various medical, educational, economic, and social needs of individuals and societies . . . it does not admit to being reductionistic either in the sense of neglecting social ministries on the one hand or confining cross-cultural work strictly to evangelize on the other. It simply retains priority for the kind of work described in the closing statement of the World Congress on Evangelism (Berlin, 1966) (Hesselgrave, 2005: 121).

The closing statement of the 1966 World Congress on Evangelism stated quite directly:

⁹ Hesselgrave actually presents four positions however the fourth position is not relevant to this study. The fourth position is one entitled, “Liberation Theology.” The position of Liberation Theology is one that promotes justice in society and the establishment of *shalom* on the earth. Essentially, gospel proclamation is replaced altogether with social action and the need for any gospel proclamation is greatly diminished. Liberation Theology was largely developed by Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian Roman Catholic. Because this position is so extreme, it falls outside of the scope of this study. Liberation Theology is more common among Roman Catholics than it is among Protestants. Hesselgrave says that “although liberation theology has been espoused by a few evangelicals in the past, it has hardly any evangelical advocates today” (2005:123).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, possessor of all authority in heaven and on earth, has not only called us to himself; he has sent us out into the world to be his witnesses. In the power of his Spirit he commands us to proclaim to all people the good news of salvation through his atoning death and resurrection; to invite them to discipleship through repentance and faith; to baptize them into the fellowship of his Church; and to teach them all of his words. (Johnston, 1978: 368-369)

To say that those who hold this position are only concerned about proclamation and that they are not concerned about social action is clearly wrong. Traditional prioritism does not advocate that the church should reach out *only* to the spiritual needs of those around them. As one recent work states so candidly:

In correcting certain aspects of some missional thinking we realize that missional thinking itself is striving to correct abuses of traditional missiology. Both corrections may be necessary at times. Hopefully no evangelical would say (or think), “Ah, let it all burn up. Who cares about food and water for the poor? Who gives a rip about HIV? Give ‘em the gospel for the soul and ignore the needs of the body.” This is what missional thinking is *against*. And similarly, we hope no evangelical would say (or think) the opposite: “Sharing the gospel is offensive and to be avoided. As long as the poor have job training, health care, and education--that’s enough. The world needs more food, not more sermons.” This is what we trust missional thinking is *not for* (DeYoung & Gilbert, 2011: 23).

An example of scholarship that misrepresents traditional prioritism and its concern for both teaching and social action can be found in Kyung Soo Na’s work on the Great Commission. In this work, Na criticizes those who believe that the Great Commission is primarily proclamation because they neglect social action. He portrays them as one-sided, dogmatic theologians who take the Bible out of context to say that the Great Commission is only proclamation. Na is correct when he says that “Parts of the Bible have been used out of context to build up dogmatic theologies or to support philosophical ideas. In such cases, the Bible is used as a proof-text rather like a dictionary where dogmatical ideas depend upon a few biblical phrases” (Na, 1998: 25). As an example of someone who portrays these ‘dogmatical’ ideas, L. Legrand is mentioned because he sees the Great Commission in Matthew’s gospel as “a mission of teaching” (Na, 1998: 27). Na cites page 78 of Legrand’s work *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible* as a proof-text for his example. However, it is reasonable to question whether Na has adequately represented Legrand. Is Legrand really one-sided

in his view of the Great Commission? A closer look at Legrand's work reveals that Legrand does indeed advocate more than merely teaching or proclamation.

The Missionary commandment thereupon specifies the ecclesial actions that are to comprise the Christian initiation: baptism and a Christian instruction calculated to lead to a practice: 'to carry out . . .' We have come a long way from simple proclamation – from Mark's *kerussein*, which relies solely on the radical, instant impact of the Good News. In Matthew, 'mission' denotes a long-term program: sacrament, continuous formation, and ethic in accordance with the new justice. The Judaic background of rabbinical instruction is evident. Likewise evidenced is a long missionary experience, and the development of an ecclesial practice (Legrand, 1990: 78).

In practice, there may be missionaries who are solely involved in proclamation and who neglect social action. However, this researcher has not been able to find any author who would promote such an idea. One possible reason why it would be difficult to find an author who sees the Great Commission as solely a mission of teaching is because the Great Commission itself speaks of doing. Christ instructed His disciples to make disciples by "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Therefore the teaching element of the Great Commission is inextricably connected with an "observation" or "doing" element. If missionaries are apathetic to the needs of those around them, it is not because they believe that the Bible wants them to be apathetic. In a work by Jesse Johnson, the author presents apathy concerning compassion to the poor as an error in American culture. He opposes this error by reminding his readers that "God's compassion toward the needy is one of the factors that motivated him to save people by sacrificing his Son. This compassion has been given to Christians, and they should demonstrate it to others. In this context, apathy is unthinkable" (Johnson, 2010: 157). Later he writes, "a shrewd business person may build bigger barns while closing his heart to his brother in need, but he cannot do so while having a true relationship with Jesus" (Johnson, 2010: 150-151).

At the heart traditional prioritism is the belief that Jesus' fundamental mission was not to minister to people's physical and temporal needs, but rather to minister to their spiritual needs through proclaiming the good news of salvation. As DeYoung and Gilbert state quite succinctly, ". . . it simply was not Jesus' driving ambition to heal

the sick and meet the needs of the poor, as much as he cared for them. He was sent into the world to save people from condemnation” (2011: 55). Those who hold this position do not deny that Jesus served people’s temporal needs; they simply believe that Christ’s service in that form was not His primary mission. Rather, “the mission of Jesus is not service broadly conceived, but the proclamation of the gospel through teaching, the corroboration of the gospel through signs and wonders, and the accomplishment of the gospel in death and resurrection” (DeYoung and Gilbert, 2011: 57). A key distinction of this view is that it believes the signs and wonders that Jesus performed were primarily for confirmation of the message He proclaimed. In other words, Jesus’ purpose for healing people was not social action, nor was it to gain a platform to be heard. Rather, according to this view, Jesus’ primary purpose for performing signs and wonders was to confirm that His message was indeed from God. Commenting on Hebrews 2:3-4, F. F. Bruce makes the following statements that many who hold traditional prioritism would see as validation for their view of signs and wonders:

The witness of their informants, however, was confirmed by the signs and wonders and mighty works which attended their proclamation of the message; these were tokens granted by God to attest the truth of what was proclaimed. The testimony of the New Testament writings to the regularity with which these phenomena accompanied the preaching and receiving of the gospel in the early apostolic age is impressive in its range. The “mighty works and wonders and signs” which marked the ministry of Jesus (Acts 2:22) continued to mark the ministry of the apostles from Pentecost onward (Acts 2:43). They were associated particularly with the bestowal of the Spirit, as indeed they are here: God’s “distributions of the Holy Spirit” to believers in accordance with his sovereign pleasure formed the most conclusive demonstration and seal of the truth of the gospel (F.F. Bruce, 1990: 68-69).

Defining Christ’s fundamental mission is important for those who advocate traditional prioritism because according to their belief, Christ’s mission sets the pattern for the disciples’ mission. D.A. Carson demonstrates this as he comments on John 17:18.

Use of the phrase *into the world* for the mission of the disciples shows that there is no necessary overtone of incarnation or invasion from another world. Only the broader descriptions of the coming of the Son ‘into the world’ betray the ontological gap that forever distances the

origins of Jesus' mission from the origins of the disciples' mission (D. A. Carson, 1991: 566).

Andreas Kostenberger further explains the relationship between Christ's mission and the mission of his disciples when he writes,

The Fourth Gospel does not therefore appear to teach the kind of "incarnational model" advocated by Stott and others. Not the way in which Jesus came into the world (i.e. the incarnation), but the nature of Jesus' *relationship with his sender* (i.e. one of obedience and utter dependence), is presented in the Fourth Gospel as the model for the disciples' mission. Jesus' followers are called to imitate Jesus' selfless devotion in seeking his sender's glory, to submit to their sender's will, and to represent their sender accurately and know him intimately (1998: 217).

In essence, traditional prioritism emphasizes the importance of proclamation for the purposes of conversion and spiritual growth. The focus is not on social action; however, those who prefer traditional prioritism do not necessarily believe that they neglect social action. Because teaching 'all that Christ commanded' is emphasized, traditional prioritism believes that actions of mercy to those around them will naturally flow out of those who are genuinely converted and spiritually mature. Therefore, it focuses on the proclamation of God's Word, with the desired outcome that those who hear it will reach out to those around them with both further proclamation and acts of love.

There is a group of Christian writers that may be perceived as holding a one-sided view of proclamation in mission. In reality, this group does practice social action. However, the social action is focused not on the poor and needy in general, but the poor and needy within the church. One such writer clearly articulates the position of that group:

Certainly our modern society has many grievous problems which wrench the heart of the believer. But we must follow Scripture and not our emotions. There is no evidence in the New Testament of any church-sponsored social programs organized for the purpose of alleviating human suffering in the unsaved world. Careful study of the New Testament will reveal that efforts to meet social needs were confined for the most part to believers (Acts 4:32-37). James exhorts

us to demonstrate our faith by helping fellow believers who are ‘naked’ or ‘destitute of daily food’ (James 2:15). These and other illustrations show us that the social concern of the early believers was primarily aimed at fellow believers and not at the world in general (Pickering, 1994: 18-19).

The tension that exists between those who emphasize proclamation and those who emphasize social action does not exist because a certain group of Christians does not believe that they should show compassion to others in need. Johnson has stated that it would be “unthinkable” (2010: 157) for any follower of Christ to maintain such a practice. Pickering implies that social concern today should be “primarily aimed at fellow believers” (1994: 18-19), (cp. Gal.6:10) but he does not go so far as to say that Christians should not practice social action or have social concern. These are good examples of why it would be unfair to insist that a certain group of Christians is completely one-sided in their view of mission as proclamation only.

2.2.1 A Word Picture to Describe Traditional Prioritism – A Sower or Planter

To summarize the view of traditional prioritism, it may be helpful to use a word picture. In this view, which sees the mission of the church is primarily verbal proclamation, social action is seen as an important but secondary result (or even a byproduct) of transformed lives. A visual picture that could help give understanding to this view is that of a sower whose primary goal is to plant a tree. The primary goal of the missionary in this picture is to spread gospel seeds through proclaiming the Word of God. His goal is that the seeds he plants would take root and grow into trees – each tree representing a spiritually transformed person. A natural byproduct of these trees is fruit. Some of that fruit would be social action to help meet the needs of others. Since the missionary is a “tree” himself (planted in part through the labor of some other sower) he will naturally want to meet the needs of others, but his primary goal is to evangelize and make disciples through the ministry of the word.

2.3 Position 2: Restrained Holism

In restrained holism, mission is a balance between verbal proclamation and social action. Before one can have an accurate understanding of restrained holism, however, *holism* itself needs to be defined.

Depending on who is applying it, *holism* has a variety of denotations and connotations. Some emphasize the ministering through word, deed, and sign. Others stress ministering to the whole person – spirit, mind, and body. Sometimes the emphasis is on transforming whole cultures and societies. At other times the emphasis is on transforming the whole world (Hesselgrave, 2005: 120).

For the sake of this study, *holism* “promotes the partnership of social (and, sometimes, political) action with evangelism in ways that supersede traditional theory and practice” (Hesselgrave, 2005: 120).

Restrained holism is a moderate version of holism. It is moderate because “it attempts to preserve the traditional priority for evangelism, while elevating social action . . . In restrained holism evangelism and social action are made to be *more or less* equal partners, although a certain priority is reserved for evangelism” (Hesselgrave, 2005). The key words here are *more or less* because the distinction between which partner should carry the priority is often blurred. Recent key voices in evangelical circles enthusiastically promoting restrained holism include John Stott and Tim Keller.

John Stott's influence has been felt both through his leading role in the Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization and through his many books.¹⁰ In recent decades, international congresses on evangelism have had a great influence on the focus of missions throughout the world. In fact, the transition from a focus on gospel proclamation to a focus on social action can be traced through these conferences. There is no greater example than what has occurred at those associated with Lausanne. As David J. Hesselgrave notes:

¹⁰ Examples include *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975, 2008) and *The Cross of Christ* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986, 338-9).

Right up to the World Congress on Evangelism held in Berlin in 1966, conservative evangelicals had tended to speak univocally and in accord with the conference theme: 'One race, one gospel, one task.' Priority was given to discipling the nations and evangelizing the world. But by the time of the First International Congress on World Evangelization (Lausanne, 1974), priorities had begun to change. From that time on, through the Consultation the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), the Global Consultation on World Evangelization (Manila, 1989) and to the present hour, the poor have been at or near the top of the evangelical agenda (2005: 119).

At the 1974 Lausanne Conference, more than 2,000 attendees signed the Lausanne Covenant which declared that "evangelism and socio-political involvement are part of our Christian duty."¹¹ However, the Covenant also explicitly said that, of the two, gospel proclamation is of higher priority: "In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary."¹²

In spite of this clear statement, an astonishing event took place on the last day of the conference. Approximately 200 conference attendees drafted a statement entitled "Radical Discipleship" that gave social action equal status with gospel proclamation. While it was too late to change the wording of the Lausanne Covenant, Stott (who had chaired the committee that drafted the Covenant) publically affirmed the alternative Radical Discipleship position the last night of the conference (Stott, 1975: 288-289). It was a watershed moment for world evangelization, essentially redefining the church's mission.

After the 1974 conference, in the face of resistance from Billy Graham and others, Stott continued to press for an equal role for social action in Christian missions.¹³ By 1982, the triumph of Stott's view was clear. In that year he chaired a Lausanne committee tasked to write a report on the subject. Under Stott's guidance, the report

¹¹ Lausanne Covenant, paragraph 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, paragraph 6.

¹³ The following four paragraphs were published as part of an article by the author of this study along with another missionary in *The Master's Seminary Journal*, May 2014 (Biedebach & James, 2014: 32-33).

again recommended that the church make social action and evangelism equal partners in the fulfilling of the Great Commission:

They are like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird. This partnership is clearly seen in the public ministry of Jesus who not only preached the gospel but fed the hungry and healed the sick. In his ministry, *kerygma* (proclamation) and *diakonia* (service) went hand in hand. His words explained his works, and his works dramatized his words. Both were expressions of his compassion for people, and both should be ours (Stott, 1982).

Even recently, at the Lausanne III Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, the tension between gospel proclamation and social action was highlighted as several of the speakers emphasized the priority of gospel proclamation. One attendee of the Cape Town Congress who was also present at the 1974 Congress in Lausanne reported,

The works of compassion, social action and the pursuit of justice, as well as the respect for the dignity of the human person, were also strongly emphasized. The right balance between evangelization and social action is not always easy to find. In one of the morning Bible studies, John Piper emphasized the central place of the proclamation of the Word in articulating these two aspects of the Christian ministry. Several speakers addressed this topic, underlining the importance of discipleship and of adopting a lifestyle characterized by humility, integrity and simplicity in response to the 'gospel' of the prosperity movement as well as to the rampant materialism in the West (Berthoud, 2012: 61).

Of course, because of the tension between gospel proclamation and social action, not everyone was pleased with the emphasis that John Piper made at the 2010 Congress. As one attendee noted,

Naturally there were grumbings. While John Piper was a favorite expositor for many, others resented his importing controversy over eternal suffering into an Ephesian text that had nothing to do with it. Some regretted that N.T. Wright was not invited to speak, sensing an underlying attempt to steer the evangelical movement toward a particular kind of theology (Stafford, 2010: 37).

Another recent influence towards social action comes from Tim Keller, the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. He has played a leading role in

promoting social activism through his books *Generous Justice* (2010) and *Center Church* (2012), and through his prominent role as co-founder of the Gospel Coalition. Peter Naylor sums up Keller's view succinctly: "Keller's main thesis is that the church has a twofold mission in this world: (1) to preach the gospel and (2) to do justice, which involves social and cultural transformation and renewal" (2013: 137).

Stott and Keller have essentially drawn a very difficult line for the church to walk: trying to keep both the proclamation of the gospel the main thing *and* focus the church on social action simultaneously. In theory, it's a noble blend of word and deed, of transformational truth and dynamic love. Naturally, however, the further one pushes, the closer one gets to the place where social involvement ceases to be distinctly Christian and even starts to supplant that which is distinctly Christian. It's no small wonder that David Bosch calls this issue "one of the thorniest areas in the theology and practice of mission today" (1991: 401).

In the 1990s, Stott acknowledged the danger of the dual emphasis on proclamation and social action that he campaigned for: "The main fear of my critics seems to be that missionaries will be sidetracked" (1992: 342). This is the main concern of this study: is it true that sending churches and missionaries *are* becoming sidetracked? Are pastors and missions committees aware of the distinction between missionaries who focus on social action and missionaries who focus on Bible translation, theological training, church planting, and gospel proclamation?

Lesslie Newbigin is another writer that suggests a form of restrained holism as an appropriate approach toward mission. In his book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, Newbigin includes a chapter entitled *Principalities, Powers, and People*. In this chapter, he promotes the perspective that principalities and powers exist in the forms of human agencies (like Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas) as well as other controversial issues (like racial issues and materialistic views of money). His chapter is a call for Christians to unite together in a battle against these real principalities and powers. "How is the power to be disarmed and placed at the service of Christ? Only by the power of the gospel itself, announced in word and embodied in deed" (Newbigin, 1989: 209-210). Newbigin believes that a partnership between evangelism and social

action is necessary. Furthermore, he believes that anything less than a partnership between the two results in a weakened gospel. He writes:

A conversion of individuals which failed to identify, unmask, and reject that spiritual ideological power would have been as futile as an attempt by Christians to wrest that power from its holders. Evangelism which is politically and ideologically naïve, and social action which does not recognize the need for conversion from false gods to the living God, both fall short of what is required (Newbigin, 1989: 210).

In another one of Newbigin's works, he uses words that are more abrasive. He simply states that "words without deeds are empty, but deeds without words are dumb. It is stupid to set them against each other" (1987: 11). Newbigin's words are a reflection of his view of the Kingdom of God. For him, the Kingdom of God must be proclaimed verbally and it must be pointed to by acts of good will. According to Newbigin, Both are essential for people to *come near* to Jesus.

It is . . . stupid to say: 'The one thing that matter is to go everywhere and preach the gospel; all other activities such as schools and hospitals and programmes for social action are at best merely auxiliary and at worst irrelevant.' Why should people believe our preaching that the kingdom of God has come near in Jesus if they see no sign that anything is happening as a result, if they can see no evidence that disease and ignorance and cruelty and injustice are being challenged and overcome? Why should they believe our words if there is nothing happening to authenticate them? On the other hand, it is equally stupid to say: 'Preaching is a waste of time. Forget it and get on with tackling the real human problems of poverty, injustice and oppression.' That is to repeat the folly of the people who are fed in the desert. It is to confuse the sign with the thing it points to. Our best programmes are not the kingdom of God; they are full of our pride and ambition – as the world easily sees (1987: 11).

2.3.1 A Word Picture to Describe Restrained Holism: Two Wings of the Same Bird

Perhaps the clearest descriptions of this view come from John Stott. He has described verbal proclamation and social action as "two wings on the same bird" and "two blades of the same pair of scissors" (Stott, 1982). The idea is that both proclamation

and social action work together and are necessary in conveying the Gospel. They are *more or less* equal partners in the mission and focus of the church.

2.4 Position 3: Revisionist Holism

Those who hold the view of revisionist holism view social action and gospel proclamation as “full and equal partners” (Hesselgrave, 2005: 120). The key distinction between revisionist holism and restrained holism relates to their goals. Restrained holism has a dual goal – to evangelize through proclamation and to minister to the physical needs of others. But revisionist holism has only one goal – to bring about human welfare or *shalom* (in any form). In this view, any act that makes the world a better place or transforms a person spiritually is considered a fulfillment of mission, and to make any distinction between those two acts is considered to be a false dichotomy. Proponents of revisionist holism reject “the dichotomy between material and spiritual, between evangelism and social action, between loving God and loving neighbor” (Meyers, 1999). Ron Sider advocates revisionist holism when he writes, “The time has come for all biblical Christians to refuse to use the sentence: ‘The primary task of the church is. . . .’ I do not care if you complete the sentence with evangelism or social action. Either way it is unbiblical and misleading” (1977: 17-18). Likewise, Scott W. Sunquist represents this position well when he writes,

We should be a little suspicious if a person talks about ‘both sides’ of the life of Jesus. In the past it was common to use such language, to talk about the mission of God as two dance partners (evangelism and social justice) or as two sides of the same coin. But these analogies are not just inadequate, they are misleading. Jesus was a whole person, filled to overflowing with the kenotic, self-emptying love of God. Jesus’ love is far deeper, wider, and more expansive than we could imagine. His love is as personal as his forgiveness of those who killed him, and it is as large as his suffering love for the sins of the world. Christians who are informed about their faith, who can explain why they do what they do, are giving an *evangelistic message* when they give up their holiday to feed the poor or to serve in rehab homes for the elderly (2013: 320 emphasis author's).

James Engel and William Dyrness also advocate revisionist holism. Though they don’t use the same title, they describe their position this way:

[Revisionist holism] affirms that evangelism and social transformation are inseparable elements in Christ's kingdom that embraces all of creation (Lk. 4:18-20). The goal is *shalom*- a sense of human welfare and well-being that transcends an artificial distinction between private and public worlds. *Shalom*, by its very nature, is rooted in justice and compassion (2000: 93).

Key figures in the Emergent Movement also avidly promote social justice—and reflect revisionist holism. For example, Brian McLaren's vision of being missional “. . . eliminates old dichotomies like 'evangelism' and 'social action.' Both are integrated in expressing saving love for the world” (2004: 108). From McLaren's point of view, salvation can be expressed both spiritually and physically - and since both are fully and equally noble, no distinction should be made between the two.

A key word that is often blurred in the writings of those who advocate revisionist holism is “kingdom.” These advocates argue that Christ came to banish the results of the fall; therefore, “kingdom work” includes anything in the current age that diminishes or reverses those results and promotes the good of individuals and society. In other words, Christ's kingdom is brought into existence through the general reduction of evil and injustice in society just as much as through gospel proclamation. Even David Bosch (though he most often displays signs of restrained holism), at times writes statements that fall in the camp of revisionist holism. As Bosch writes, “the kingdom comes wherever Jesus overcomes the Evil One. This happens (or ought to happen) in the fullest measure in the church. But it also happens in society” (1991: 209).

2.4.1 A Word Picture to Describe Revisionist Holism: A Waiter or Server

Traditional priorism can be pictured by a sower because of the singular goal of planting that he has through proclamation. Restrained holism can be pictured as a two-winged bird because of its dual emphasis on both evangelism and social action. Revisionist holism could be pictured as a waiter because its goal is to serve whatever feeds the society to bring about improvement. No distinction needs to be made between spiritual food and the food of social action. If both help uplift society, then

that is what should be served. The waiter is simply bringing “nourishment” (or human welfare) to the masses in whatever form it comes.

2.5 Summary

There is a massive theological gap between revisionist holism and traditional prioritism. Those who hold the traditional view would say that making social action an equal partner with the gospel, in effect, subordinates the need for repentance and forgiveness to temporal needs. They would wonder if those promoting revisionist holism might be trying to help Africa in an unhelpful way—or at least not in the *most* helpful way. Likewise, those advocating revisionist holism would see those in the traditional camp as irrelevant in the effort to lift up Africa to its rightful place in the world. Those adhering to restrained holism are in the middle, they see a necessary and *more or less* equal balance between social action and gospel proclamation.

2.6 Matthew 28:18-20 and Its Relation to Traditional Prioritism, Restrained Holism, and Revisionist Holism

It is noteworthy that in a review of recent, significant commentaries on the gospel of Matthew commentators demonstrate great unity in their interpretation of the Great Commission passage. Matthew 28:18-20, is viewed by most commentators as a passage that instructs disciples of Christ to make more disciples of Christ through the means of baptism and teaching. Proclamation of Christ’s words are a priority in this passage. Luz, Keener, France, Osborne, Nolland, and Allison all interpret this passage in a manner that supports traditional prioritism and makes very little inference to holism of any kind.

Ulrich Luz has a lengthy section on the history of how Matthew 28:18-20 has been interpreted in various generations. According to Luz, “The *ancient church* understood this command of Jesus to the eleven to refer to the apostle of that day, thus only to the initial period of the church” (2005: 626). However, in spite of the fact that this passage was not a key motivator for the ancient church as a whole, “its missionary proclamation, in the second and third centuries was largely a proclamation

locally from house to house. . .” (Luz, 2005: 626). Luz traces the historical understanding and influence of this passage from that ancient church, through the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Anabaptists, and into our modern missionary era where this passage became central to the idea of mission. Though this passage first became the “Magna Carta of missions through the English Baptist William Carey and his 1792 document” (Luz, 2005: 627), it has been considered an absolute command for many, including Abraham Kuyper and Gustav Warneck. Luz writes,

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, for Gustav Warneck, the father of modern protestant mission scholarship, 28:19 is the ‘charter of missions’; ‘to make disciples’ as a missionary task is tantamount to making Christians of non-Christians. Since Christianity is a world religion and ‘all root ideas of the gospel are directed toward a general salvation of the world, therefore the gospel story concludes with a missionary command, and therefore this missions command constitutes a central task of the Christian Church’ (2005: 627).

As Luz writes about the twentieth century and the effect that Matthew 28:19 has had on it, he highlights the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne. Because Matthew 28:18-20 was the

fundamental mandate of Jesus Christ on which the preamble of the ‘Lausanne Covenant’ is based . . . [Matthew] 28:19 was here the basic text of those who sharply criticized the ‘efforts to change the world’ and the interreligious dialogue emanating from the World Council of Churches and those who fundamentally separated themselves from the church’s task of world missions. In evangelical missions 28:19a was naturally understood primarily in the sense of the conversion of individuals (Luz, 2005: 628).

Luz acknowledges the present day tension between those who reflect traditional prioritism and those who reflect revisionist holism. The latter speak of the “falsely so-called ‘missions command’ of Matt 28:19 that had to serve for a kind of militarization of the practice of missions. . . [God does not say:] ‘Go and establish churches’; it is rather a matter ‘of the kingdom of God in the world’” (Luz, 2005: 628). Luz does not side with the holistic interpretation of the passage, rather he writes that many Christians impose ideas (such as the export of Western civilization) that find their roots outside of this passage. Luz says,

Matthew actually thinks that the church is basically and fundamentally a missionary church, and he conceives of its mission concretely as a ‘going’ to all nations. That today means many Christians and churches can no longer read this text uncritically as the Magna Carta of their missionary proclamation has reasons external to the biblical text (2005: 628).

In Craig Keener’s writings on Matthew 28:18-20, he (like most commentators) writes in line with traditional prioritism. However, he does make some statements that seem to go beyond the traditional view. At the least, some of his statements could be interpreted by those in the restrained holism camp as friendly to their view. When writing about the authority of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20, Keener says:

Because Jesus has all Authority, because he is the king in the kingdom of God, his disciples must carry on the mission of teaching the kingdom (10:7). Jesus’ instructions include an imperative surrounded by three participial clauses: one should make disciples for Jesus by going, baptizing and ‘teaching.’ Conjoined with ‘discipling,’ the ‘teaching’ involves instruction no less serious than Jewish sages customarily provided their students. In the full context of Matthew, it includes making the kind of disciples Jesus made, to carry on his mission of proclaiming and demonstrating his kingdom or rulership (2009: 718).

Keener is spot on when he writes about the participial clauses. The main verb in this passage is “make disciples.” Participles act as verbal adjectives – showing both action and description. In this context, the participles ‘going,’ ‘baptizing,’ and ‘teaching’ all describe what is involved in the process of ‘making disciples.’ It is because of these participles (specifically, ‘teaching’) that Keener can write with confidence that the “mission of proclaiming” is associated with discipleship. It is unclear, however, from where Keener draws the idea of “demonstrating his kingdom” as part of the Matthean model for discipleship. Though he mentions “the full context of Matthew,” the reader is not offered any specific passages as an example. Nor is there any further insight given to help the reader how “demonstrating his kingship or rulership” is done. In short, Keener leaves the door wide open for an interpretation that suits restrained holism. However, it is unlikely that Keener is promoting a holistic interpretation considering statements made in Keener’s earlier work on Matthew where the priority of the commission is clearly proclamation.

Because Jesus' future reign (28:18) has begun in the lives of his followers in the present age (v. 20), his people should exemplify his reign on earth as it is in heaven, as people of the kingdom, people of the future era (compare 6:10). Most significant in this passage, because Jesus has all authority, because he is King in the kingdom of God, disciples must carry on the mission of *teaching* the kingdom (10:7) (Keener, 1997: 400 emphasis his).

Keener's words in his 1997 work fall right in line with traditional prioritism. The missionary is an example of a transformed individual and his priority is to teach others with news about the kingdom.

In R. T. France's commentary on Matthew, he also recognizes that proclamation is the means to make disciples. France recognizes, however, that "the commission is expressed not in terms of the means, to proclaim the good news, but of the end, to 'make disciples'" (2007: 115). This does not mean that France denies the means, for he elaborates further by stating that "it is not enough that the nations hear the message; they must also respond with the same whole-hearted commitment which was required of those who became disciples of Jesus during his ministry" (2007: 1115).

Grant R. Osborne has written a recent commentary on Matthew that is both exegetical and applicational. In his exegetical section of Matthew 28:18, Osborne affirms with other commentators that the participles 'baptizing' and 'teaching' are "aspects of the central part of the commission ['make disciples']" (2012: 1080). In his applicational section, Osborne resoundingly calls his readers to what would fall into the category of traditional prioritism.

The task of the church is not just to evangelize, but to *disciple* the world for Christ. A huge error has occurred over the last two hundred years in the missionary movement. Our task is, of course, to reach the world with the gospel message of salvation, but too many denominations and mission organizations have been content to give little more than salvation messages. The Great Commission makes it clear that this is not enough. Every single person who is won to Christ must be anchored in Christ and taught how to live for Christ in day-to-day decisions . . . Until the secular areas of our lives have been 'baptized' with holiness, we are not truly disciples of Jesus. This is the mission of the church, and there is no excuse for shallowness.

Consider many Third World churches with little opportunity often to find depth: the shallowness there is the fault of the mission organizations that have given too little priority to (1) the education and training of the leaders in those countries, and (2) the development and publication of good literature for those countries. (Osborne, 2012: 1084)

Osborne's notion of the mission of the church is so far removed from holism that he doesn't even refer to any forms of social action in the 'Great Commission' sections of his commentary.

John Nolland concurs with other commentators that the disciple-making process written about in Matthew 28:19 involves teaching. Nolland refers to each of the eleven as "a discipling disciple: the treasure he has gained is a treasure he passes to others" (2005: 1265). He later comments that "the discipleship of the Twelve, though unique and unrepeatable, embodies patterns of discipleship which are of a more general relevance" (Nolland, 2005: 1265). Clearly, Nolland's interpretation of discipleship has a priority of teaching over social action (he never mentions the latter).

Dale C. Allison begins his comments on Matthew 28:19 by stating, "The prophecy that in Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3) comes to fulfillment in the mission of the church" (1997: 683). The question arises, do these blessings include social action as part of making disciples? While this question may be answered in a variety of ways, it appears that (at least according to Allison), if the blessings promised by Abraham do include social action, Matthew 28:18-20 is not the place in Scripture where that is taught. Allison, like most other commentators, agrees that baptism and teaching are descriptive of what was commanded – namely, 'to make disciples.' Allison writes that the instruction 'make disciples' should not be regarded "as the first in a series but as a general imperative which is filled out (although not exhausted) by what follows: baptism and instruction in obedience belonging to discipleship" (1997: 686). Elsewhere he states, "By teaching what Jesus taught, the church becomes an extension of his ministry" (1997: 686).

2.6.1 Summary of Matthew 28 Commentators

The overwhelming consensus among these commentators is that Matthew 28:18-20 helps define the mission of the church. This mission involves making disciples through baptism and teaching. While none of the commentators go as far as to deny holism as part of the Christian mission, the holistic view is conspicuously absent from their comments on the ‘Great Commission’ passage.

2.7 Matthew 25:31-46 and Its Relation to Traditional Prioritism, Restrained Holism, and Revisionist Holism

One key passage that is not only related to the topics of traditional mission and holistic mission, but also in close proximity to the commission found in Matthew 28, is Matthew 25:31-46. This passage is repeatedly referenced by advocates of holism as a passage is a “towering landmark that helps us understand the fullness of the gospel and just what Jesus expects of His followers” (Stearns, 2009: 57). According to holistic mission, if Matthew 28 is one side of the coin that instructs believers to proclaim the gospel, then Matthew 25 is the other side which emphasizes the need for social action. The apparent tension between these two passages and their close proximity are sometimes seen as polarizing. In one recent work that examined David J. Bosch’s view of mission and related it to current issues in Africa, Girma Bekele wrote,

In the broad spectrum of Christian ideas about mission popular in his time, Bosch, with some simplification, identifies two polarized trends. On one hand, from the beginning, an eschatology oriented ecclesiology has emphasized the church as being called out of the world, thus positioning the church ‘against’ the world. Mission in this circle was understood as an opportunity to save as many souls as possible from this evil world that will soon disappear . . . At the other extreme is an ecclesiology with a realized eschatology as its underpinning, focused on those obligations which are seen to flow from, for example, the description of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25 with its listing of norms that would permit or deny access to the kingdom of heaven. At some of the more radical extremes of this second position, mission is simply identified with social justice (2011: 3).

In another recent work, however, rather than highlighting the apparent tension between Matthew 25 and Matthew 28, the commonality of the two passages is emphasized. Both passages

. . . reflect God's character and embody his compassion. This compassion for people was the basis for Jesus' own mission and ministry as well as for his sending out his disciples with authority . . . In 28:16-20 Jesus' authority (exousia) is a key concept, as he sends his disciples into the world with this authority . . . in 25:31-46 it is clear that the Christian community should be a community of works of mercy in order to reflect something of God's character and will (Combrink, 2009: 84).

Others, who are advocates of holism, also emphasize what the two passages share. Tim Keller says that the "promise of the kingdom is already being fulfilled in the pouring out of the love of Christ through the Spirit! When we visit the prisoner (Matthew 25:36) . . ." (1989: 86). Four paragraphs later, Keller writes about Matthew 28 and a definition that is "more encompassing" than what traditional prioritism would advocate.

Having seen an interpretation and application of Matthew 28:18-20 that strongly supports traditional prioritism, it is appropriate to investigate what the same commentators have written about Matthew 25:31-46. The latter passage gives an account of future judgment. Jesus taught his disciples that He would return and sit upon an angel-surrounded throne with all of the nations before him. Jesus describes a scene whereby He will, as King, separate all those gathered before him as one may separate sheep and goats. The sheep will be on His right (a place of comfort) and the goats will be on His left (a place of impending judgment). According to the passage:

Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

After Jesus welcomes those who inherit the kingdom, He addresses those whom He will send away into the eternal fire. The same set of scenarios is presented to them: those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and in prison. The difference this time is that those on his left did not feed Him, give Him something to drink, invite Him in, clothe Him, or visit Him. When those on His left ask him when they saw Him in those conditions, He answers them in verses 45-46, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

In order to understand this passage, some key questions need to be asked. What does Jesus mean by the “least of these?” How does this passage relate to Matthew 28? Is this passage advocating social action, gospel proclamation, or something else? The key is the answer to the first question: “What does Jesus mean by ‘the least of these?’” In the following sections, the same commentators who gave insight into the Matthew 28 passage will help to bring understanding to the Matthew 25 passage.

2.7.1 Who are “the Least of These?”

It is common to find some contemporary writers in the field of missiology referring to Matthew 25 as a passage that is related to social action. One African theologian recently wrote,

Preparing politicians and businessmen at all levels with Christian convictions and biblical ethics remains one of the most effective ways of securing social and moral transformation in society. Related to this is the need to share resources for the benefit of the less privileged. Christ’s teaching in Matthew 25:31ff. makes the point quite pungently about the need to make necessary sacrifices for the relief of others. Surely the social problems all around us require a more positive response from a Church that is not economically handicapped and morally bankrupt to deal with the greed that ignites war situations and the refugee challenges that abound (Egbunu, 2008: 34).

While most would agree that a healthy church should be responding to physical needs of those around it, one might wonder if that is the main thrust of Matthew 25:31-45. Unlike the Matthew 28 passage which saw great unity among the six commentators

cited, there are sharp divisions among those same commentators relating to who “the least of these” are in Matthew 25:40, 45. These divisions are representative of a much larger field of commentators and other authors of missionary literature.¹⁴ Allison begins his section regarding “the least of these” by noting three major possibilities.¹⁵

The first possibility that Allison mentions is “Everyone in need, whether Christian or not” (1997: 428). Allison seems to favor this interpretation he states that this “concept goes back through our text [Matt. 25:40] to Prov. 19.17: ‘He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed’. . . What is new in Matthew is neither the idea nor the particular deeds of mercy but the identification of the needy with the Son of man.” (1997: 430). Though that statement appears to demonstrate that Allison favors this first view, he ends his section only with questions as to the identity of “the least of these” and the statement, “This novel identification – another aspect of the messianic secret – is, however, left unexplained” (1997: 430). This is a disappointing conclusion to a detailed discussion and leaves the reader in the dark.

Allison does, however, remind his readers that there are those who have chosen definite interpretations of the verse. Some see “the least of these” as everyone who is in need, whether a Christian or not. A second alternative is that the “least of these” are all Christians/disciples (Allison, 1997: 429). Among the commentators that Allison identifies as holding to this view are Origen, Basil the Great, Augustine, Bede, Thomas Aquinas, Zwingli, Luther, Calvin, B. Weiss, J. Friedrich, Ingelaere, S.W. Gray, G.N. Stanton, Court, France, and Garland.

¹⁴ One example of a recent and influential book on missions that recognizes the different interpretations is *The Hole in the Gospel* by Richard Stearns, President of World Vision. Stearns notes, “There has been much debate over the identity of those referred to in Matthew 25 as ‘the least of these brothers of mine.’ Some commentators argue that this did not mean all the poor and needy but was a specific reference to those who are disciples of Christ . . . Some argue for an even narrower definition that encompasses only Christ’s disciples involved as spreading the gospel as missionaries . . . My own belief is that Christ’s meaning here encompassed any who were poor and needy” (Stearns, 2009: 292).

¹⁵ Allison actually lists five positions or interpretations of the least of these, however he dismisses two of them because each of them is only espoused by one adherent. Allison refers to the views that the ‘least of these’ are “Jewish Christians” or “Christians who are not missionaries or leaders” as “idiosyncratic positions . . . [that] require no comment” (1997: 429). Therefore, they are not used in this categorization as well.

A similar view is that “the least of these” are Christian missionaries/leaders (Allison, 1997: 429). The commentators that Allison identifies who hold to this third position are Zahn, Gundry, Cope, Lambrecht, Hare, Blomberg, and Luz. For the purpose of this study (and because positions 2 and 3 are so similar) it is best to combine the second and third position into a single category.

Some commentators see “the least of these” as *everyone who is in need, whether they are Christians or not* – which has been referred to as “The universal interpretation.” According to Luz, in the Universal Interpretation, “the brothers and sisters of the Son of Man are all the people of the world who are in need, non-Christians as well as Christians” (Luz, 2005: 267-268). Others see the “least of these” as referring strictly to *Christians and most likely Christian missionaries/leaders – itinerant preachers of the gospel*. This view has been referred to as ‘The classic interpretation.’ Luz notes that the classic interpretation was “the church’s interpretation that was the most widely accepted until around 1800” (2005: 271). This interpretation saw a great connection between ‘the least of these’ and ‘my brothers.’ “The meaning was clear: in the final judgment the standard by which Christians are measured is the works of compassion that they have done or not done toward their poor and needy Christian brothers and sisters” (Luz, 2005: 272).¹⁶

2.7.1.1 The Universal Interpretation

Among the six commentators that gave this study insight on Matthew 28:18-20, four of them lean toward or advocate the universal interpretation. Dale Allison has already been mentioned as a commentator who leaves the issue undecided but has more statements that support the universal interpretation than ones that lead his readers toward the classical interpretation. John Nolland, on the other hand, does not leave the issue unresolved for his readers.

¹⁶ It should be noted that Luz writes about a third interpretation referred to as “The exclusive interpretation” (2005: 273). This is a relatively new view that began in the early 1800’s and became more popular in the 1960’s. It is a view that interprets the word ‘nations’ to mean ‘pagans’ and therefore this judgment is only for non-Christians. Because none of the commentators used for this section held to the exclusive interpretation, there was no need to interact with it above.

Nolland is not sure whether all of the elements of this passage are original and suggests that the phrases ‘the least’ and ‘my brothers and sister’ are possible additions or modifications to the text (2005: 1031). Whether these phrases are modifications by Matthew or not, Nolland makes it clear that the first group (the group to the right of Jesus, mentioned in verse 40) is “composed of disciples committed to doing the will of Jesus’ Father . . . [for they] have helped other disciples in need.” (2005: 1032). However, Nolland sees a significant difference between the ‘least of these’ in verse 40 and the ‘least of these’ in verse 45. Nolland deduces that the latter group, which happens to have the words ‘brothers and sisters of mine’ omitted in verse 45 is not a group of needy disciples but a needy group of both believers and unbelievers. Nolland writes: “The omission . . . implies that ‘the king’ values service to the needy as service to himself irrespective of whether those served are disciples or not. It may not be service to his brother or sister, but it does count as service to himself” (2005: 1034). Therefore, Nolland takes an interesting view on this passage. According to Nolland, in verse 40, Jesus rewards faithful disciples who take care of other disciples. Five verses later, Jesus punishes unfaithful people for not looking out for the poor and needy in general. He bases the difference on the omission of “brothers and sisters in verse 45. Because of his recognition that verse 45 stresses the importance of looking out for all poor people, Nolland supports the universal interpretation.

R. T. France could also fall into the category of the universal interpretation, although he also adds an interesting twist to his interpretation. Unlike Nolan, who sees the omission in verse 45 as an indicator that verse 45 is speaking about a different group of people, France is not deterred by this. “The omission of ‘brothers and sisters’ with reference to the ‘smallest’ in v. 45 is to be attributed to literary abbreviation rather than to any change in the identity of the people concerned, as the reader will naturally understand the phrase in the light of the fuller expression in v. 40” (France, 2007: 966). France is impressed, however, by the response of both those on Christ’s right and His left and their utter surprise that it was indeed Jesus that they were either ministering to or neglecting. Their surprise influences his interpretation of this passage, as he says:

For the striking feature of this judgment scene is that both sheep and goats claim that they *did not know* that their actions were directed toward Jesus. Each is as surprised as the other to find their actions interpreted in that light. They have helped, or failed to help, not a Jesus recognized in his representatives, but as a Jesus *incognito*. As far as they were concerned, it was simply an act of kindness to a fellow human being in need, not an expression of their attitude to Jesus. They seem closer to what some modern theologians call ‘anonymous Christians’ than to openly declared supporters of Jesus himself (France, 2007: 959).

What is unique about France’s interpretation is that he believes that it is “probably right to read ‘these my smallest brothers and sisters’ as a description of disciples” (2007: 958) – which is typical of the classical interpretation. However, because France believes that the acts of kindness in verses 35-40 were practiced as deeds towards any fellow human being in need, he believes that the passage is teaching Christians to care for any fellow human being in need. Therefore, though his interpretation has elements of the classical interpretation, his application of the passage places him squarely among those who hold to the universal interpretation.

Another supporter of the universal interpretation is Ulrich Luz. His interpretation is unique because he believes that Matthew’s intention was along the lines of the classical interpretation. Perhaps that is why Dale Allison says that Luz is in the category that sees “the least of these” as “Christian missionaries/leaders” (Allison, 1997: 429). Allison, however, seems to be incorrect in his categorization of Luz.¹⁷ For, while Luz does see Matthew as one who could have only had a classical interpretation of ‘the least of these,’ Luz personally holds a different view from Matthew and Matthew’s original readers. Matthew’s original readers:

... would have thought primarily of the itinerant radicals [preaching disciples] ... [remembering] the disciples discourse of chap. 10 that spoke of the disciples’ wanderings and outsider status (10:5-6; cf. 28:19), of their poverty (10:9-10), of their dependence on hospitality (10:11-15), and of the dangers they encounter in a hostile world as they face trials and risk their lives (10:17-23; 28-29; cf. 24:9). Above all, however, they will think of the end of the disciples’ discourse, where

¹⁷ Admittedly, since Allison’s commentary was written in 1997 and Luz’s commentary was written in 2005 it is possible that Luz either changed or clarified his position in a later work. If that is the case then Allison would have had no way of knowing Luz’s unique view.

they are called to extend hospitality to the wandering brothers and sisters (10:40-42) (Luz, 2005: 281).

So, according to Luz, Matthew's original readers would have considered 'the least of these' to be disciples who were itinerant preachers of the gospel. But Luz, himself, sees it differently. In his view, this passage considers 'the least of these' to be the poor and needy in general, both Christians and non-Christians – the universal view. Luz explains,

We have spoken of the fascination of the universal interpretation of our text that for many people, including me, it is at the heart of the gospel, because it exposes fundamental areas of life to Jesus' gospel of unconditional love. Exegetically it does not represent Matthew's view. In all probability the evangelist saw in Jesus' needy brothers not every needy human being but only needy disciples. Thus the question for us is: Are we theologically justified in interpreting a text contrary to its original sense when the resulting meaning is central to the gospel itself and helpful for modern people who receive it? In this case I would like to answer this question with yes . . .” (Luz, 2005: 283).¹⁸

2.7.1.2 The Classical Interpretation

In Grant Osborne's commentary on Matthew, the author addresses this issue head on. He admits that it is common to “read Jesus' challenge as directed to all humanity or to the disciples in terms of social action; that is, Jesus will judge everyone on the basis of helping the poor and the needy” (Osborne, 2012: 935). Osborne even lists many commentators who fall into that social action or universal interpretation camp. He includes Jeremias, Hill, Bonnard, Davies, Allison, and France. And yet, in spite of that position's popularity, Osborne insists that it is “not the best understanding, for 'the least of these brothers and sisters of mine' must refer to believers, not all humanity and Jesus is not teaching a works righteousness form of salvation here”¹⁹

¹⁸ Luz continues this discussion by giving a number of reasons to justify his decision of interpreting this text contrary to its original sense. This researcher has included Luz's reasons in the next section of this chapter which deals with hermeneutics.

¹⁹ Osborne is right to mention works righteousness here, as some commentators struggle with a Pelagian interpretation of this passage. Some of those struggles will be mentioned in more detail in the next section of this chapter which deals with hermeneutics. However, it should not be assumed that all those who hold to the universal interpretation also believe in works righteousness.

(2012: 936). His main reason for maintaining that ‘the least of these’ must be Christians or missionaries is because it is “unlikely that unbelievers would be called ‘my brothers and sisters’ . . . Jesus’ followers are clearly his ‘brothers and sisters’” (Osborne, 2012: 937).

Craig Keener joins Grant Osborne in his classical interpretation stance. He claims that “the popular view that this text refers to treatment of the poor or those in need” is not “exegetically compelling” (2009: 361). To demonstrate the popularity of the universal view he mentions Gross, Hare, Catchpole, and Feuillet. Keener does admit, however, that “on other grounds it [the popular view] would be entirely consonant with the Jesus tradition” (2009: 361). Keener brings up an important point: there are other passages that support a general care and concern that Christians should have for the world’s poor. Galatians 6:10 says, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” The issue at hand is not a contrast between those who desire to demonstrate compassion to the poor and those who do not. Both those who hold to the universal interpretation and those who hold to the classical interpretation believe that Christians, in general, should have a genuine care and concern for the world’s poor. They may, however, disagree on *how* to best demonstrate genuine care (i.e., should it be primarily through social action or primarily through gospel proclamation?).

The issue at hand, however, in the debate between the universal interpretation and the classical interpretation is whether Matthew 25:31-46 teaches that Christians should focus on social action. Those who hold the universal interpretation say, ‘Yes, Jesus is teaching the importance of caring for the poor and needy people in the world, regardless of their faith.’ Those who hold the classical view say that ‘in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus is teaching the importance for Christians to care for other Christians who are in need because they are proclaiming the gospel.’ Craig Keener is clear in his classical interpretation of this passage. He states:

In the context of Jesus’ teachings, especially in the context of Matthew (as opposed to Luke), this parable addresses not serving all the poor but receiving the gospel’s messengers. Elsewhere in Matthew, disciples are Jesus’ *brothers* (12:50; 28:10; compare also *the least* – 5:19; 11:11; 18:3-6; 10-14); . . . The King thus judges the nations

based on how they have responded to the gospel of the kingdom already preached to them before the time of the Kingdom (Matt 24:14; 28:19-20). True messengers of the gospel will successfully evangelize the world only if they can also embrace poverty and suffering for Christ's name (Keener, 2009: 605).

A survey of these commentators (Allison, Nolland, France, Luz, Osborne, and Keener) has sufficiently demonstrated that there is tension between two different interpretations of Matthew 25:31-46. The universal interpretation is one that focuses on social action. The classical interpretation focuses on gospel proclamation and care for those who risk their lives to proclaim. The further question that David J. Bosch pondered, however, involved the relationship between the interpretation of Matthew 25:31-46 and the interpretation of Matthew 28:18-20. Therefore, it is appropriate for this study to identify the connections between those two passages.

2.8 What is the Connection between Matthew 28:19-20 and Matthew 25:31-46?

Because there are two major interpretations of 'the least of these' in Matthew 25, the observed connections also fall into two categories. Those who hold to a universal interpretation of 'the least of these' in Matthew 25 have a different set of connections from those who hold to the classical interpretation. Though the proponents of the universal connection do see a certain relationship, they demonstrate a weaker connection between the two passages than those who promote the classical interpretation. The classical interpretation sees both Matthew 25 and Matthew 28 as passages that relate specifically to verbal proclaimers of the gospel. The universal interpretation views Matthew 28 as having to do more with gospel proclamation and Matthew 25 as having to do more with social action.

2.8.1 The Universal Interpretation's Connection

In his commentary on Matthew, Dale Allison raises an insightful question regarding the identification of 'the least of these' and their relationship to 'all the nations' (which, in turn, has a relationship with 'all the nations in 28:19). In Matthew 24:14, Jesus foretold that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations . . ." Allison points out that the phrase, 'all the

nations' is used in Matthew 24:14 and that the same phrase is used in Matthew 25:32 when 'all the nations' are gathered before the throne of Jesus for judgment. He questions whether Matthew could have had in mind that 'all the nations' would have been held responsible for helping Christians. He argues that it is more likely that 'all nations' would be held accountable for helping or not helping the world's poor. Allison asks, "Can we (even with 24:14 in mind) believe that Matthew thought 'all the nations' would have opportunity to succor needy Christians?" (1997: 429). Allison identifies 'all the nations' in Matthew 25 as "all humanity" (1997: 422) and he links that same identification when 'all the nations' is used in Matthew 28:19 where "here too the expression has universal sense" (1997: 685). Therefore, one of the links that Allison notices between Matthew 25 and Matthew 28 is that in Matthew 25, Jesus warns that there will be a day in the future when 'all the nations' will be held accountable for their assistance to the poor and needy in the world. And, in Matthew 28, Jesus instructs his disciples to make disciples of 'all the nations.' Making disciples is "filled out (although not exhausted) by what follows: baptism and instruction in obedience . . ." (Allison, 1997: 686). Obedience is another link that Allison points out. However, Allison's soteriological interpretation of Matthew 25:31-46 hints at Pelagianism. Allison sees Matthew's analogy this way: "In the world to come it will be said to him, 'what has your work been?' If he then says, 'I have fed the hungry,' it will be said to him, 'That is the gate of Yahweh' . . . And similarly, he who has brought up the orphans, and he who has given alms, and he who has practiced works of love" (1997: 418).

Whereas Dale Allison only hints at Pelagianism, R. T. France is more outspoken in his soteriological interpretation of Matthew 25. This ultimately effects his connection to Matthew 28. France notes that Matthew 25:31-46 has "traditionally been an embarrassment especially to Protestant readers because it appears to say that one's final destiny – and nothing could be much more final than 'eternal punishment' or 'eternal life,' v. 46 – depends on acts of philanthropy, a most un-Pauline theology and one which sounds uncomfortably like Pelagianism" (2007: 957). Two pages later, France comments on the same passage:

So it does not seem possible to read this passage as expressing a 'Pauline' doctrine of salvation through explicit faith in Jesus. A

systematic theologian can devise a scheme whereby justification by grace through faith and judgment according to works are together parts of the greater whole, but Matthew is not writing systematic theology, and the present passage brings to its fullest expression his conviction that when the Son of Man comes he will ‘repay every person according to what they have done’ (16:27). This is the ultimate outworking of the Matthean motif of reward for those who have lived according to the will of God. And that will is here spelled out in terms of the way people have responded to the human needs of “these my smallest brothers and sisters” (2007: 959).

For France then, the connection between Matthew 25 and Matthew 28 is indirect. Like Allison, he sees that Matthew 25 warns of a future judgment where the criterion for judgment is social action. In Matthew 28, the disciples are instructed to make disciples by means of baptism and teaching obedience. The instruction in the Great Commission passage is more about proclamation than social action – though the proclamation is expected to result in obedience that, according to France, will result in “act(s) of kindness to . . . fellow human being(s)” (France, 2007: 959). According to France, these acts of kindness will then determine “one’s final destiny” (2007: 957).

Ulrich Luz, who personally sees social action as something that is “at the heart of the gospel” (2005: 283), makes no direct connections between Matthew 28 and Matthew 25 when writing about the universal interpretation. Luz does make an indirect connection between Matthew 25 and every other passage that Matthew wrote about the gospel – the connection of love. Luz sees “love as a functional criterion of the truth” (2005: 283). Therefore, according to this criterion, ministering to the world’s poor and making disciples through proclamation are related in that they both demonstrate love.

Since Luz recognizes that Matthew’s view, “exegetically” of ‘the least of these’ would not have been the same as Luz’s personal view (2005: 283), Luz does make a connection between Matthew 28:19 and Mathew 25:40 – but the connection is only according to Matthew’s view. Luz writes that when Matthew and his readers would have heard Jesus’ words about *the least of these* brothers and sisters of mine, they would have remembered:

... the disciples' wanderings and outsider status (10:5-6; cf. 28:19), of their poverty (10:9-10), of their dependence on hospitality (10:11-15), and of the dangers they encountered in a hostile world as they face trials and risk their lives (10:17-23, 28-29, cf. 24:9) (2005: 281).

Therefore, according to Luz, from Matthew's perspective, the passage that links chapter 25 with chapter 28 is Matthew 10. Because this is a common association in the classical interpretation, more will be written about this connection, below.

2.8.2 The Classical Interpretation's Connection

For the advocates of the classical interpretation, the connections between Matthew 25 and Matthew 28 are more direct than those who hold the universal interpretation. However, because the classical interpretation does not view Matthew 25 as a passage that teaches social action, there is no social action link between Matthew 25 and Matthew 28.

As Luz noted, one of the key passages that links Matthew 25 and Matthew 28 is Matthew 10. In Matthew 10, Jesus sends out his disciples to "preach" to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:16-17). As they traveled, they were not to accept money. Nor were they to take extra clothing. They were to rely on the hospitality of strangers and they were warned that some would not receive either their message or them. In fact, they were to "beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in the synagogues" (Matt. 10:17). The chapter ends with these words of hospitality towards the disciples who were sent out, "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." Craig Keener notes a striking connection between the hospitality towards Christian disciples sent out in Matthew 10 with the hospitality rewarded in Matthew 25. He writes this about the Matthew 25 passage:

... one unwittingly treats Jesus as one treats his representatives (10:40-42), who should be received with hospitality, food, and drink (10:8-13, 42). Imprisonment could refer to detention under trial before magistrates (10:18-19), and sickness to physical conditions stirred by the hardship of mission (cf. Phil 2:27-30; perhaps Gal 4:13-14; 2 Tim

4:20). Being ‘poorly clothed’ appears in Paul’s list of sufferings (Rom 8:35), including his most detailed extant apostolic *peristasis* catalogue (1 Cor. 4:11) (Keener, 2009: 605).

Keener makes a connection between Matthew 10 and Matthew 25 that links Matthew 25 to the Great Commission in Matthew 28. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus is sending out his disciples once again. The difference is that in Matthew 10, he sent them out to the ‘lost sheep of Israel,’ but in Matthew 28 he sends them out to ‘all the nations.’ If Matthew 25 is really about receiving Christ’s messengers, as Keener suggests, then it would also apply to receiving those who disciples who follow the Matthew 28 commission. This would also include Paul, as Keener mentions a number of references to Paul in his comments on the Matthew 25 passage.

Keener also has a soteriological view that differs from France regarding the Matthew 25 passage. For Keener, one’s eternal destiny is not based on good works, but rather it is a result of how one has accepted the message of Christ. In Keener’s perspective, rejecting the messenger is evidence that one has rejected the message. For Keener, ‘receiving’ Christ’s messengers involves “embracing the message of the kingdom. . . . Unless disciples ‘receive’ one another in God’s household, they reject Christ whose representatives their fellow disciples are” (2009: 606).

The key concept that connects Matthew 25 to Matthew 28 in Keener’s mind is ‘proclamation.’ In response to the King’s judgment in Matthew 25, Keener writes, “The King thus judges the nations based on how they have responded to the gospel of the kingdom already preached to them before the time of his kingdom (24:14; 28:19-20)” (2009: 605). Grant Osborne agrees. Commenting also on Matthew 25, he states, “Jesus’ message is that the world will be judged on the basis of how it treats those ‘little people’ who God is sending to it” (Osborne, 2012: 937).²⁰

2.9 Conclusions

²⁰ It should be noted that Osborne directs his readers to Keener and others in a parenthetical note for further insight into the basis for judgment.

A number of observations can be made based on this theological study. The tension among many of the theologians who write about practices relating to mission is evident. Traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism are all distinctly different. While they have many similarities in their practices, their theological moorings are tied to different foundations.

Traditional prioritism recognizes the importance of social action and yet maintains the priority of gospel proclamation in mission. This position is sometimes misrepresented as a practice that neglects social action altogether; however that is not the case at all. Social action is seen as an important byproduct of spiritual seeds that are sown through gospel proclamation. The goal is to bring about spiritual renewal through proclamation, however, those that are spiritually renewed will naturally care about the suffering of those around them. Traditional prioritism sees the signs and wonders of Jesus as validation or confirmation of the message proclaimed, not as social action nor as a platform to gain a hearing. Jesus' fundamental mission was to minister to spiritual needs of others in order to bring about spiritual renewal. Christ's disciples should imitate His mission. Some traditional prioritists see Scriptural examples of social action as aimed primarily toward those within the church. But their focus for those outside the church is still the same as all traditional prioritists. A word picture that could be used to represent traditional prioritism is one of a sower / planter. The aim of the traditional prioritists is, like Christ, to plant seeds leading to spiritual renewal. Social action then is a byproduct of the renewal. A key text for the traditional prioritist is Matthew 28:18-20. Matthew 25:31-46 also supports gospel proclamation as the *least of these* are disciples or missionaries sent out from Matthew 10. Rejection of those *sent out ones* is representative of rejection of Christ's proclaimed message. Those who reject the proclaimed message are deserving of eternal punishment.

Restrained holism sees social action and gospel proclamation as more or less equal partners in mission. In this view, social action and gospel proclamation should be balanced equally in ministry and mission. Just as Jesus did both spiritual proclamation and physical healing, Christians today should be involved in both. Restrained holism views signs and wonders as examples of Jesus' compassion and of

social action. Jesus' fundamental mission was to minister to both physical and spiritual needs and His model of ministry was incarnational. Therefore, just as Christ was God in the world ministering to spiritual and physical needs, believers should be Christ in the world, ministering to the physical needs and spiritual needs of the world. A word picture that could represent restrained holism is that of two wings of the same bird. As a bird needs two wings to work together as more or less equal partners, so the mission of the church is to reach out more or less equally to the physical needs and the spiritual needs of the world. Matthew 28:18-20 is not a passage that directly teaches restrained holism, but it is complementary to holistic ministry as it presents the proclamation 'wing.' Matthew 25:31-46 teaches about the least of these, who may be the world's poor or possibly fellow disciples that are suffering. In either case, both social action and gospel proclamation make up the dual mission of the church.

Revisionist holism differs from restrained holism in that the revisionist holism says *either* social action *or* gospel proclamation is important in mission. As long as one of the practices is present, mission is being accomplished. One can be practiced without the other. The signs and wonders in the Bible are simply examples of compassion towards others. Jesus' fundamental mission was human welfare (physical or spiritual). According to revisionist holism Christ's ministry is inspirational: it should inspire Christians to increase human welfare in any way possible. A word picture that describes revisionist holism is one of a waiter – willing to serve either social action or spiritual teaching for the betterment of mankind. Matthew 28:18-20 is not a passage that directly teaches revisionist holism, but it is complementary to holistic ministry as it presents the proclamation option. A universal interpretation of Matthew 25:31-46 is more common among revisionist holism as it sees *the least of these* as the world's poor – including those within the church and those outside of the church. Any action that helps those in the world who are suffering is the mission of the church.

The theological issue that is at the root of the tension between those on the side of proclamation and those on the side of social action is not concern for the physical needs of others, rather it is the definition of the gospel. The key question is, does the gospel include the directive to transform society through meeting the physical needs of society, or is the gospel focused on spiritual transformation that results in a people

who are also concerned with meeting the physical needs of others? Traditional prioritism says that the gospel is the proclamation of salvation by grace through faith. Restrained holism says that the gospel is both proclaiming salvation by grace through faith and living like Christ by reaching out with social action. Revisionist holism says that the gospel could be fulfilled with social action without any message being verbally proclaimed.

	Traditional Prioritism	Restrained Holism	Revisionist Holism
The Goal	Spiritual renewal through the proclamation of the gospel is the goal but social action is an important byproduct from those that are renewed.	Spiritual renewal through the proclamation of the gospel and social action is the dual goal.	Human welfare is the goal and it can be accomplished either through gospel proclamation or social action.
Signs and Wonders in the Bible	Validation or confirmation of the message spoken, but the focus was always on the message.	Examples of Jesus' compassion and social action towards the poor	Examples of Jesus' compassion and social action towards the poor
Jesus' Fundamental Mission	To minister to spiritual needs	To minister to both physical and spiritual needs	Human welfare (spiritual or physical)
Jesus' Model of Ministry	One that should be imitated	One that was incarnational	One that was inspirational
A Representative Word Picture	A sower or planter. He is focused on planting seeds leading to spiritual renewal. A byproduct will be social action.	Two wings of the same bird. Social action and gospel proclamation work together equally to communicate	A waiter or waitress. Eager to serve either social action or gospel proclamation (or

		renewal.	both). Whatever will bring human welfare to the situation.
Matthew 28:18-20	A Key Passage supporting the primary action of making disciples.	A complementary passage that emphasizes one side of the position	A complementary passage that emphasizes one option of the position.
Matthew 25:31-46	<i>The least of these</i> are missionaries sent out in Matthew 10. Rejecting them is representative of rejecting the message.	<i>The least of these</i> may be the world's poor or possibly fellow disciples suffering.	<i>The least of these</i> are the world's poor

Figure 2.1 A Representative Chart of Mission

CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL DISSEMINATION AND INTERPRETAION OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 has demonstrated from a theological study that there is definite tension between those who view mission as primarily gospel proclamation and those who view mission having another focus (traditional prioritism). Some missionaries have a dual focus on both gospel proclamation and social action (restrained holism). Still others see the mission of the church as being fulfilled by either gospel proclamation or social action (revisionist holism). Chapter two also identified many issues that surround and feed the tension: namely, one's understanding of the Great Commission and familiarity with it; one's priorities in mission; and thirdly, how those priorities relate to the responsibility of living like Christ and proclaiming His message.

Chapter 3 will present, interpret, and translate the empirical quantitative data collected by the researcher. The over-all aim of this quantitative data is to determine if the tension expressed in the theological study exists in practice among missionaries in Malawi. Key issues among those surveyed include: whether or not they view themselves as missionaries; has the Great Commission been a key influence in their practice; what is their view of the church in Malawi; what are their ministry priorities (in other words, what takes up most of their time and effort); are they involved in baptism; are they involved in teaching; and are they involved in discipleship?

3.2 Research Method

In order to evaluate the tensions, understandings, and motivations that underlie both mission as social action and mission as gospel proclamation, the researcher developed and administered a survey. This survey was developed specifically for missionaries serving in Malawi in 2012. The survey was administered to 103 missionaries from September 2012 – January 2013. The software programs used to collect and organize the survey results include both Excel and Survey Monkey.

The rationale behind surveying these missionaries was to find out firsthand what missionary practices are in Malawi. As missionaries respond to the questions relating to the Great Commission, social action, and gospel proclamation, a better understanding of what practices are priorities for missionaries in Malawi can be acquired.

3.3 Sampling / Population

The researcher used a probability sampling method that included random selection (Babbie, 1998: 203). To ensure that the random selection process was carried out with integrity, the researcher first wrote a letter to the Chief Immigration Officer in Malawi requesting a list of every Protestant religious worker in Malawi that was a current holder of either a Temporary Employment Permit or a Permanent Residence Permit.²¹ Permission was granted on August 17, 2012,²² and a complete list of more than seven hundred Protestant religious workers in Malawi was given to the researcher.

Upon evaluation, it became apparent that not all of the names on the list were actually Protestant religious workers. The original list of Protestant religious workers in Malawi received by the researcher had a base population that was grouped by their associated organization. Five organizations did not meet the criteria to qualify for this research project.²³ Those organizations were the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Teeth Savers, and Malawi Telecom.

²¹ See Annexure F to view a copy of this letter.

²² See Annexure G.

²³ The latter two organizations had no religious affiliation, therefore it was clear that they should be removed from the list. Two of the other organizations were also easy to identify as non-qualifying organizations for this study. In the Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, Mormons are said to "differ from historic Christianity" (Moreau, Netland, Engen, & Burnett, 2000: 661). Jehovah's Witnesses are also said to bear "a different gospel" (Moreau, Netland, Engen, & Burnett, 2000: 516). Admittedly, the Seventh Day Adventists are much more difficult to exclude from a research project such as this one. They are a religious organization and they are identified by many as protestants (Moreau, Netland, Engen, & Burnett, 2000: 36). There is also widespread agreement that many Seventh Day Adventists are fellow believers. In fact, in his classic work on cults, Dr. Walter Martin stated his conviction that "one cannot be a true Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Christian Scientist, Unitarian, Spiritist, etc., and be a Christian in the Biblical sense of the term, but it is perfectly possible to be a Seventh-day Adventist and be a true follower of Jesus Christ despite certain heterodox concepts" (Martin, 1965: 360). So why exclude this group from a research project on Protestant missionaries in Malawi? The simple answer is that there is not a unified consensus among the majority of Protestants that Dr. Martin is correct in his evaluation of the Adventists. In fact, Dr. Martin himself

The organizations in the original and revised list of Protestant workers in Malawi were in alphabetical order on an Excel spreadsheet. In order to generate a random sample group, the researcher added a new column within the Excel spreadsheet and named it “Random_number.” Then, in the first cell underneath this heading the researcher typed “RAND” and pressed enter. Using the copy and paste function, “RAND” was pasted into every cell in the column and a random number was assigned to each name on the original list. Finally, the records were sorted using the “Random_number” column and the sample frame was taken in the order that the list was put in after the randomization.²⁴ The missionaries that were surveyed and who ultimately made up the sample group for this research project were all contacted from the sample frame described above.

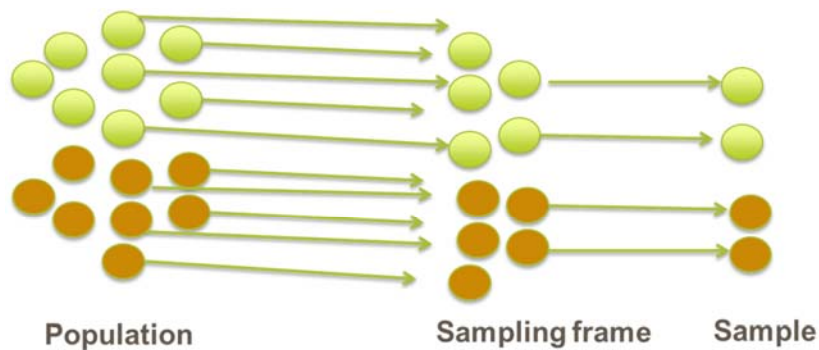


Figure 3.1 Sample Process²⁵

admits that “Such Christian leaders as Louis. T. Talbot, M.R. DeHaan, John R. Rice, Anthony A. Hoekema, J.K. Van Baalen, Herbert Bird and John R. Gerstner have taken the position that Adventism is in fact a cult system” (1965: 365). The decision to remove the Seventh Day Adventists from this research project was not taken lightly. No offense was intended for those who are of that faith and who would have liked to have been represented in this study. However, because there is not a widespread consensus among Protestants that Seventh Day Adventists are also Protestants, it was decided to remove them from this study. In choosing to exclude them from the research project, the results have the potential to be accepted and used by a larger group of protestant churches.

²⁴ This process is described in further detail on the following website: www.surveymonkey.com/blog/en/blog/2012/06/08/random-sample-in-excel/

²⁵ Ibid. This graphic was produced by Surveymonkey.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Research assistants were selected to help in the data collection procedure. The researcher accepted applications for these positions from students of African Bible College in Lilongwe, Malawi. Assistants were accepted based on the following criterion: 1) their English skills needed to be high, 2) they were capable and honest individuals, 3) they were teachable, 4) they were from different areas of Malawi (thereby making it easier for them to visit and interview missionaries throughout the country), 5) they needed to interact well with foreigners, 6) it was preferred if they were not already involved in many extra-curricular activities, 7) it was preferred if they attended church and were familiar with biblical passages and terms, 8) they needed to be computer literate.²⁶

Six research assistants were selected to assist with the administration of the questionnaire. Two training sessions were held for the research assistants and during the data collection period, meetings were held at least once per month to answer questions, deal with difficulties, and motivate assistants. By far the greatest challenge was finding the contact details for missionaries. The list from the Chief Immigration Officer of Malawi did not provide contact details. During the training sessions, research assistants were each given a portion of the list of religious workers in Malawi. Assistants were guided in avenues to pursue contact details. These included contacting organizations, the phone book, internet searches, speaking to missionaries in nearby communities, and searching local electronic bulletin boards that expatriates in Malawi often use. Research assistants were also trained in how to respond to refusals. If someone was contacted but hesitant to meet with them to fill out a survey, the assistant was not to put undue pressure on the person but to offer some alternatives, such as taking the survey online.

Research assistants were trained together and were given instructions on every question on the survey. Assistants were given the background behind the question, and were taught how to respond if asked questions about a particular question. Effort

²⁶ See annexure H for the application for research assistants.

was made to ensure that all research assistants would ask the questions in the same way and that uniform procedures would be followed.

After the research assistant made initial contact with the missionary participant, the participant was asked if he or she would be willing to participate in a survey. Each participant then signed a consent form before they took the survey.²⁷ Survey results were logged into a computer either by the participant or the research assistant. The computer program used to process all of the data and store it is called Survey Monkey.²⁸ Each respondent was given the same survey with identical questions in the same order. The quantitative survey was given to 103 respondents that form the sample group. The quantitative data was then transferred into the Microsoft Excel program for the processing of various computerized pie charts and graphs.

3.5 Profile of Respondents

The 103 respondents for the quantitative study were all missionaries in Malawi who had served in Malawi in 2012. They worked for various missionary organizations including ABC Christian Academy; ABC Community Clinic; African Bible College; Action Ministries Trust – Ntcheu; Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi; Apostolic Church of Pentecost in Malawi; Assemblies of God; Baptist Church of Malawi; Baptist Mission in Malawi; Bible Baptist African Ministries; Brethren in Christ World Missions; Central Church African Presbyterian Blantyre Synod; Central Church African Presbyterian Nkhoma Synod; Central Church African Presbyterian Livingstonia Synod; Church of God; Church of God in Christ; Daeyang Luke Hospital; Emmanuel Baptist Church; Evangelical Association of Malawi; Evangelical Baptist Church; Faith Bible Ministries; The Flood Church; Free Methodist World Mission; Grace Church in Malawi; Kalibu Academy; Kalibu Ministries; Kid's World Outreach; The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada; Liebenzeller Mission; Lutheran Mission; Mount Sinai International School; New Hope Free Methodist; Redeemed Christian; Reformed Presbyterian Church; Scripture Union Malawi; Society for International Ministries; Teen Missions International; There is Hope Ministries;

²⁷ See Annexure C.

²⁸ www.surveymonkey.com is an online survey program that includes text analysis for open responses as well as SPSS integration.

Trinity Church International. For the sake of anonymity, the data from each of the 103 respondents will remain coded for the remainder of this project. Each respondent has been assigned a numeric code that is untraceable except in the researcher's private records.

The respondents were missionaries that were sent from numerous countries. The majority of the respondents are originally from the United States of America. However, there were also respondents from Australia, Austria, Britain, Burundi, Canada, Germany, Holland, India, Korea, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

3.6 Pilot Study / Pre-Testing

According to Kevin Gary Smith's guide for students doing theological research, a pilot study not only helps to "gather information about deficiencies in the questionnaire and ideas for improving it," but it also "provides the questionnaire, as a research instrument, with greater validity" (2008: 235-236). Before the questionnaire was administered to any of the randomly selected respondents, the researcher conducted a "pre-test" or "pilot study" by administering the questionnaire to several missionaries in Malawi who were not part of the sampling frame.

After the initial Pre-testing, the following changes and additions were done to the survey that had been submitted to and approved by the Ethics Committee. All changes were minor and were for the purpose of clarity. Question 2 was added to ensure that the person taking the survey is familiar with Matthew 28:18-20. Since the research revolves around the application of this passage, it is essential that the participant is fully aware of the contents of the passage. Question 3 was changed slightly. Option "A" is now "less than 3 years" instead of less than "4" years. Option "B" was also adjusted to include "3-5" rather than "4-8." Options "C" and "D" were also adjusted slightly. This researcher felt that the categories were too broad and none of the pretested participants has been in Malawi for more than 9 years. The questions relating to personal information were moved to the end of the final version of the survey. This was done because if demographic questions are placed at the beginning

of a survey, “the form can easily be seen as a kind of interrogation and the respondent will be much more guarded in providing accurate responses” (Sogaard, 1996: 132). On question 8, numbers (1-4) were added to the four categories of priorities to make verbal responses easier from participants. On question 15, The words “7-day” were added to the instructions for clarity and the words “Remaining Hours” were added to the blank of “other activities so the participant wouldn’t feel obligated to add up all the hours in the week. On question 20, numbers (1-4) were added to the four categories of priorities to make verbal responses easier from participants. This researcher also added the category of “eating only vegetables” as a control question. It is anticipated that most missionaries will not place the same priority on “eating only vegetables” as they do “baptism” or “Bible study.” On a few other questions one or two words were added for clarity. The majority of the questions, however, remained unchanged.

3.7 Research Ethics

Most of the 103 participants selected for this project signed an informed consent document (see Annexure C) prior to taking the survey. The informed consent form explained the topic of the study, the purpose of the study, various procedures and risks, as well as information about participation and confidentiality. This informed consent document was presented to the ethics committee at Stellenbosch University and approved as a “low risk” study (see Annexure E for the approval letter). Those participants who filled out their survey online were emailed a copy of the informed consent document and were asked to respond with an email acknowledging that they understood the information about the survey and that they consented to participate in the study. All signed consent forms and emails are printed out and on file with the researcher.

3.8 Research Objectives

“All research is directed by a research problem or objective. In a theological thesis, the main research problem will govern the objective of the descriptive component of the study” (Smith, 2008: 230). The primary objective of this quantitative research

questionnaire is to give more insight as to the practice of missionaries currently in Malawi and how they might relate their practice to the Great Commission as presented in Matthew 28:18-20. Related to that primary objective are eight sub-problems or key questions that the research endeavors to determine. Do they consider themselves to be missionaries? Are they familiar with the Great Commission? What is their perspective on the church in Malawi? What are their ministry priorities in Malawi? What is their view and involvement with baptism? What is their view and involvement with teaching? What are their personal details? Each of these key questions is helpful in determining if there is indeed a disconnect between the instructions of the Great Commission and the practices of missionaries in Malawi.

3.9 Related Research

In Chapter 2, three different positions relating to missionary practice were introduced. Traditional prioritism holds that while social action has an important place in missionary practice, gospel proclamation must be the priority. Restrained holism views missionary practice as having an equal partnership between social action and gospel proclamation. Revisionist holism takes the issue a step further because it holds that either gospel proclamation or social action as viable priorities – whatever benefits human welfare is a valid priority for revisionist holism.

The question at hand with this research project is to determine whether the practice of missionaries in Malawi reflects traditional prioritism, restrained holism, or revisionist holism. As the empirical data are reviewed, they will be viewed through the lenses of these three positions to determine which position is represented in practice.

3.10 Empirical Dissemination and Interpretation

The quantitative data is analyzed primarily through discriminant item analysis. Discriminant item analysis provides “the response rate for each item as well as the total sample size and the overall percentage of returns, since not all respondents will answer the question” (Smith, 2008: 241). The eight key questions (listed in section 3.8 of this chapter), which are research objectives, will serve as an outline for analysis

and interpretation. The responses to these key questions will then interact with the three positions of traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism.

3.10.1 Missionary Status

This first research objective, dealing with the respondents' missionary status, is straightforward in its approach but essential for this study. It is important for all respondents to identify themselves as missionaries in order to participate in this study. Since there is some confusion as to who qualifies as a missionary,²⁹ and this study is on missionaries, it is critical that only missionaries complete the questionnaire. In fact, research assistants were instructed not to survey anyone on their list who would answer the second question in the survey with "I do not consider myself to be a missionary."

There were four questions in the survey that had the objective of determining whether or not the respondent was a missionary. Question 2 asked directly, "Which statement best describes your missionary status in Malawi?" None of the respondents indicated that they did not consider themselves to be missionaries. 52 respondents said that they were sent to Malawi from a missionary sending agency. 28 respondents said that they were sent to Malawi by a church outside of Malawi. 21 respondents said that they were "self-supporting" missionaries, also known as "tent-maker" missionaries. Two respondents skipped the question, however on question 4, they indicated the number of years that they have been serving as a missionary in Malawi, therefore those two respondents were still included in the study.

²⁹ In chapter one, there was a discussion regarding the difficulty of determining who qualifies as a missionary and who does not. Indeed, with Bosch's admission that "ultimately mission remains undefinable" (1991: 9), there can be a strong argument that the term 'missionary' is also undefinable. Since the term missionary comes from the Latin *mitto*, and means "sent one" this researcher is satisfied with a broad definition of a missionary simply as 'one who is sent.' Since many sending churches may have a variety of definitions for the term that might be more narrow, the researcher is willing to accept the identification from the respondent as validation he or she is indeed a missionary.

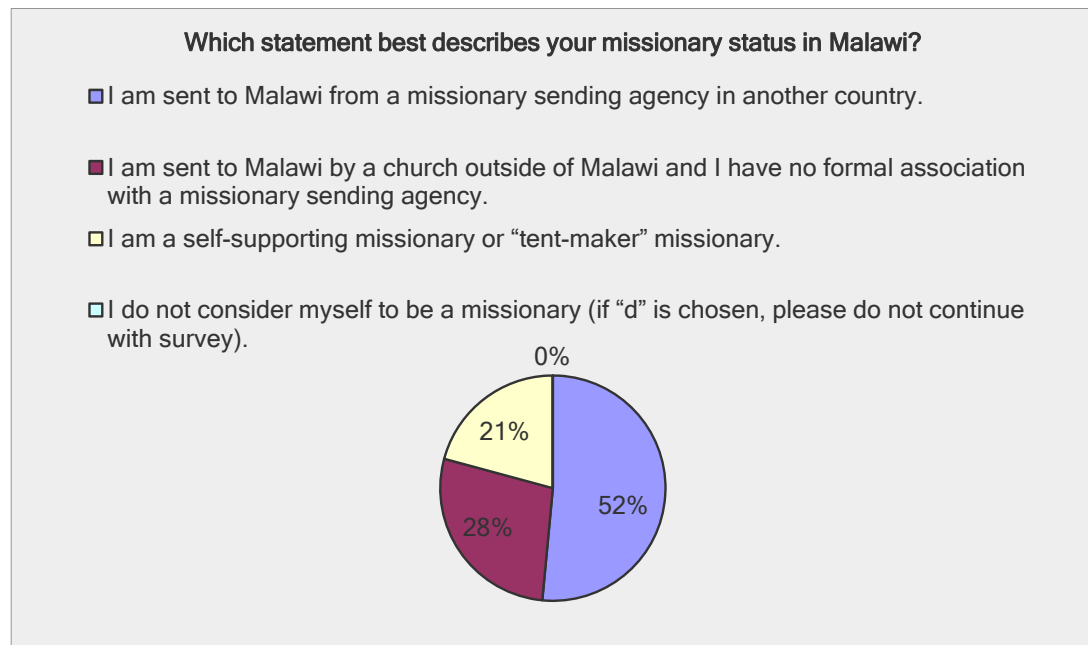


Figure 3.2 – Question 2

Traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism all have equal interest in the fact that the participants are indeed missionaries. None of the three positions is necessarily strengthened or weakened by the category that a particular missionary might identify himself or herself in (sent by a mission agency, church, or self-supporting). Although, self supporting missionaries are much more prone to be involved in social action. In fact, just over 95% of the self-supporting missionaries are involved in social action. 80.95% of them are school teachers, 9.52% of them are medical missionaries, and 4.76% of them consider themselves to be mercy ministers. That leaves just 4.76% of self-supporting missionaries serving in a proclamation role (evangelist). By contrast, nearly half (47.5%) of those missionaries in Malawi who are supported by churches and organizations outside of Malawi are serving in gospel proclamation roles such as Bible teachers, pastors and evangelists. Looking at these figures through the lens of traditional prioritism, it seems that missionaries who are not self-supporting are much more likely to maintain gospel proclamation as a priority.

One interesting detail about the surveyed missionaries in Malawi is that more than 70% of them have only been serving there for five years or less. This is significant

because it demonstrates that most participants are relatively inexperienced with missionary work in Malawi.

How many years have you been serving as a missionary in Malawi?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 3 years	37.9%	39
3-5 years	34.0%	35
6-9 years	13.6%	14
10 or more years	14.6%	15
answered question		103
skipped question		0

Figure 3.3 – Question 4

3.10.2 Great Commission

Out of all the questions on the questionnaire, the only one that all 103 participants answered identically was Question 3. This question stated:

Are you familiar with the following verse? Matthew 28:18–20 “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

The participants unanimously affirmed that they were familiar with this passage which indicates that this is indeed a key passage for missionaries. In addition to the participants’ familiarity with this passage, 97% of them indicated that the passage was influential to their work in Malawi. More than half (53.9%) said that it was extremely influential and another 32.4% said that it was very influential. 10.8% said that the passage was somewhat influential and the remaining 2.9% said that it was not very influential. Interestingly, from the perspective of traditional prioritism, 87.18% of the missionaries (who identified themselves in question 11 as being involved primarily in gospel proclamation ministries) said that the Great Commission passage was

extremely influential. The remaining 12.82% of them said it was very influential. This indicates, generally speaking, that those missionaries who are involved in gospel proclamation ministries seem to value the influence of the Great Commission more than those missionaries who are primarily involved in social action.

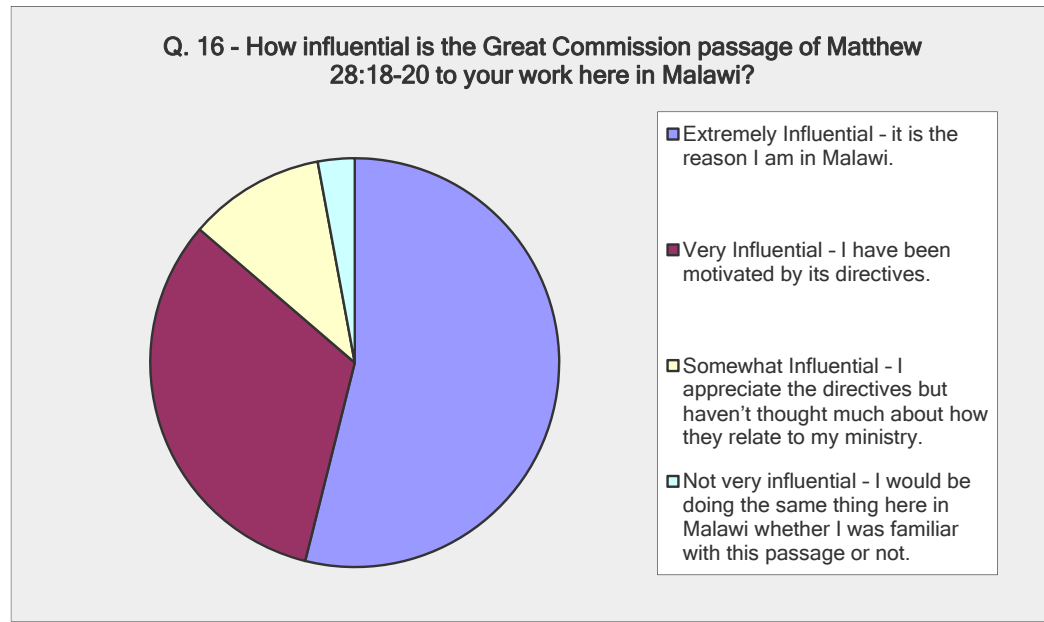


Figure 3.4 – Question 16

3.10.3 View of the Church in Malawi

Related to the importance of missionary involvement in Malawi is the state of the church in Malawi. Some may suggest that if the church is established and functioning properly in a certain country that the role of missionaries would naturally transition from that of traditional prioritism to that of revisionist holism and general outreach for the church. Admittedly, this study is not a study focused on the church in Malawi. Also, given the minimal amount of time that at least 70% of the participants have lived in Malawi, one wonders if they are qualified to assess the spiritual health of the church in Malawi. Nevertheless, a missionary's perception of spiritual health in Malawi should motivate that missionary to contribute in a way that will best help the church. If the church lacks solid biblical teaching, one would expect that many missionaries are there to help teach church members and train teachers. If the church abounds with good teachers, one would expect that missionaries would devote their

efforts elsewhere. Among missionaries in Malawi, the majority of missionaries (nearly 65%) believe that the spiritual health of local Christian churches currently rates at 5 or below on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Interestingly, the percentage of missionaries that believe the spiritual health of the church is poor increases (to 76.31%) when question 5 is filtered to include only those missionaries who indicated that they are pastors, evangelists, and Bible teachers on question 11. This would support the idea that the lower a missionary perceives the spiritual health of a country's church to be, the more motivated he or she is to practice traditional prioritism.

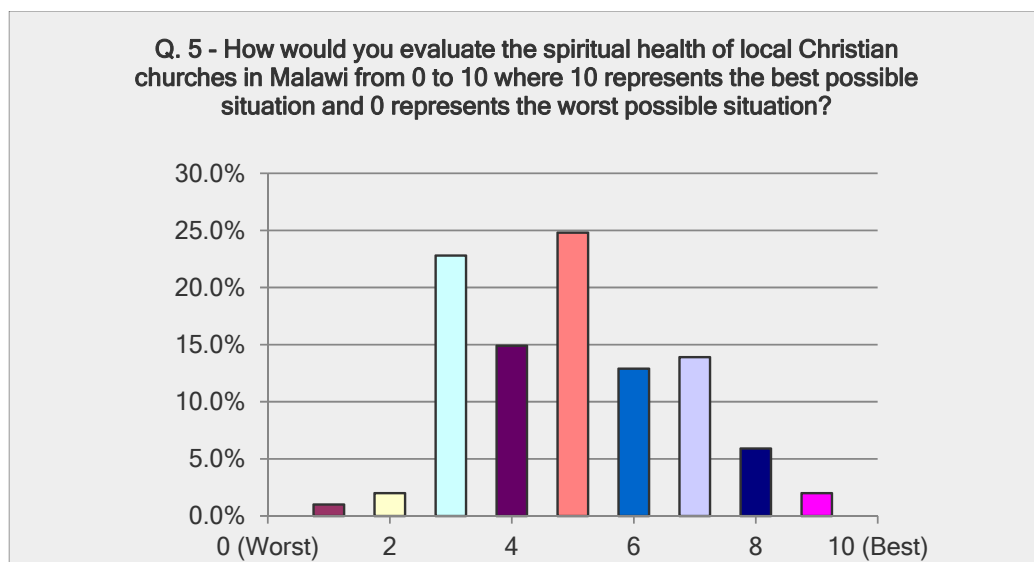


Figure 3.5 – Question 5

Even still, because the majority of all missionaries surveyed in Malawi consider the spiritual health of local churches to be poor, or at best average, teaching and preaching the Bible is a need that they see for missionaries in Malawi. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that more than 90% of the missionaries surveyed believe that preaching and teaching of the Bible should be a top priority for missionaries in Malawi (question 10, below). In fact, proclamation ministries (such as evangelism, preaching, small group discipleship, and one-on-one discipleship) were all seen as top priorities for missionaries in Malawi by missionaries in Malawi. 60%-95% of those missionaries surveyed said that the proclamation ministries mentioned above should take priority over social action ministries. Social action

ministries (such as HIV education, orphan care, construction projects, and agricultural training/ministry) were deemed to be low priorities by the majority of missionaries surveyed. Only 10%-30% of the missionaries surveyed believed that social action work should be a top priority for missionaries. Those percentages drop when filtered by the missionaries primarily involved in proclamation ministries (pastors, evangelists, and Bible teachers identified in question 11). Among that group, top priority is given by only 10.6% for orphan care; 7.69% for HIV education; 7.69% for Agriculture; and 2.5% for construction. Again, the data reveal that those who are involved in proclamation ministry are more likely to see a greater need for traditional prioritism type ministry in Malawi because most of them don't see social action ministry as top priorities.

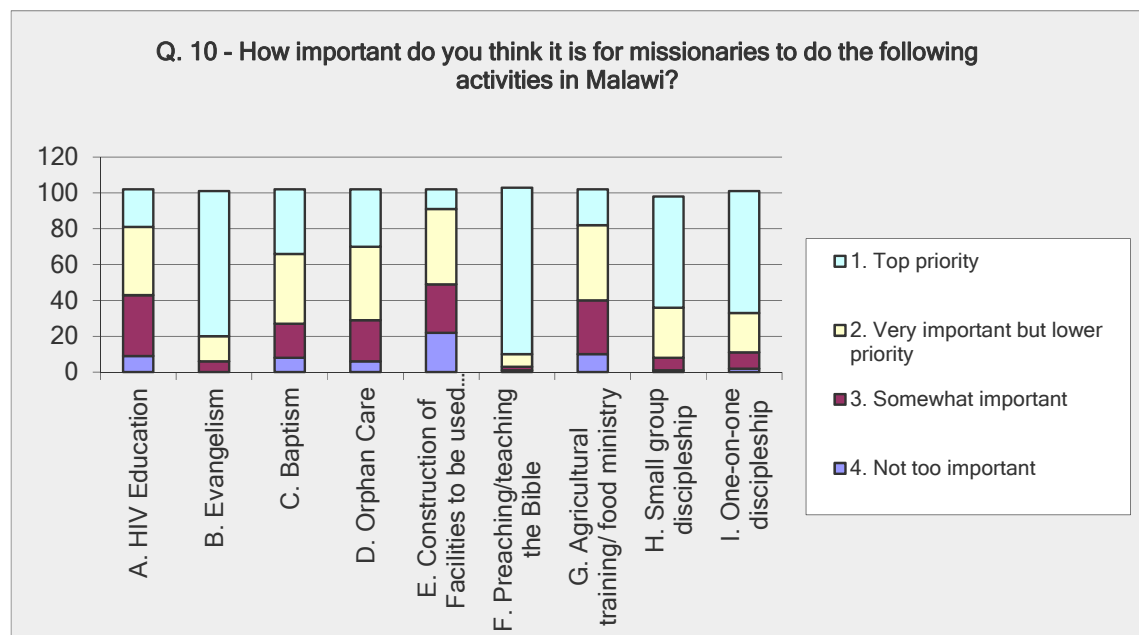


Figure 3.6 – Question 10

Considering the indications that all surveyed missionaries have made regarding the local churches and their need for missionaries to be involved with teaching, one would expect that most missionaries would be involved with local churches. And, indeed, 77.7% of missionaries surveyed are involved in local churches on a regular basis. 16.5% of those remaining do not attend the same church each week as their ministry responsibilities require them to visit several churches in Malawi each month.

Six missionaries in Malawi indicated that they were not yet committed to a local church.

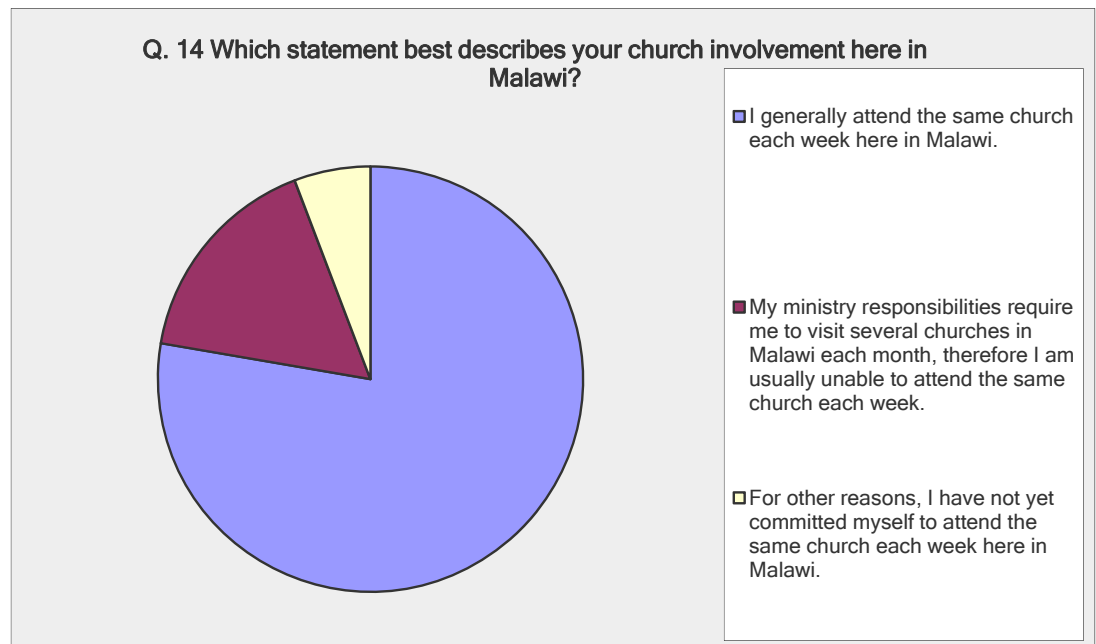


Figure 3.7 – Question 14

3.10.4 View of Ministry Priorities

One of the most enlightening discoveries of this questionnaire was that the majority of missionaries in Malawi describe their roles more in terms of social action than in terms of gospel proclamation. The majority of missionaries practice a relative holism or a revisionist holism rather than a traditional prioritism. In light of the priorities that missionaries say should be most important in Malawi (Question 10) one would expect that missionaries would be heavily involved in discipleship, Bible teaching, and evangelism. However, 62% of missionaries in Malawi describe their primary roles as ones that are more associated with social action. The majority of missionaries surveyed in Malawi are involved in activities like teaching school children (36.9%); medical ministry (11.7%); agricultural work (1%); mercy ministry (3.9%); youth work (2.9%) and support staff (5.8%). Traditional missionary activity, such as pastors (7.7%), evangelists (4.9%), and Bible teachers (25.2%) make up the minority of missionaries surveyed in Malawi. In fact, the survey data revealed that there were

nearly as many missionary school teachers in Malawi (36.9%) than there were pastors, evangelists, and Bible teachers combined (37.8%).

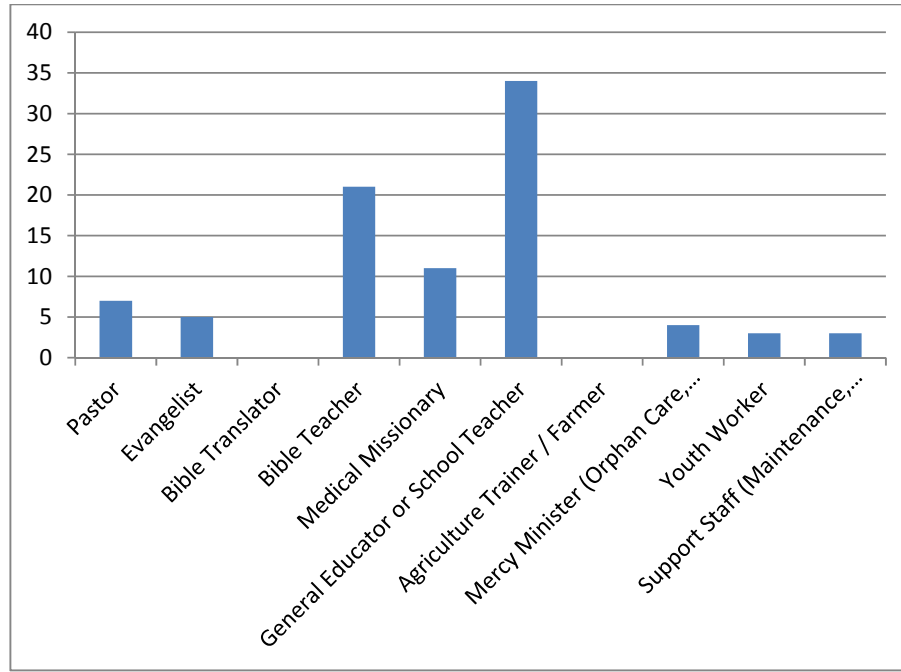


Figure 3.8 – Question 11

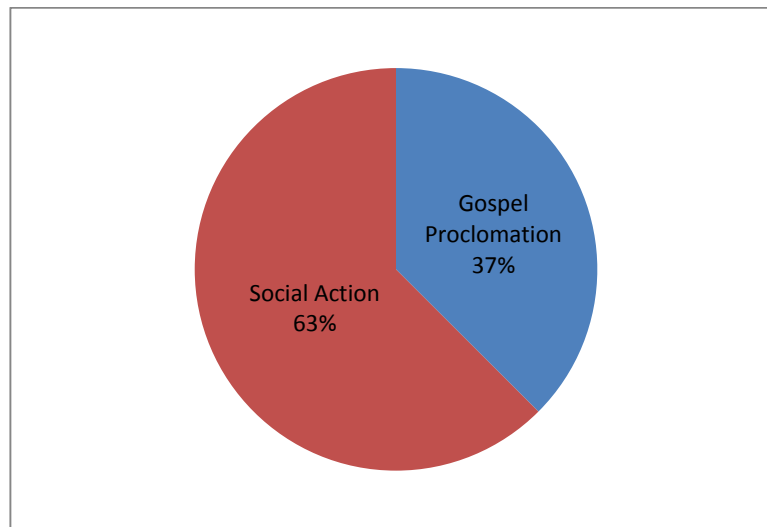


Figure 3.9 – Consolidation of Question 11

3.10.5 View and Involvement with Baptism

Baptism is a subject that most missionaries surveyed seem to be familiar with. The majority of them (81 participants) believe in “Believers’ Baptism” while only 19 participants believe in Pedo-baptism.

Q. 9 - Please respond with "yes," "no" or "not sure" to the following statements about yourself or your belief:

Answer Options	Yes	No	Not Sure	Response Count
E. I believe that the church should baptize infants.	19	67	12	98
F. I believe that the church should only baptize believers.	81	12	8	101

Figure 3.10 – Question 9

In spite of the fact that most missionaries hold a doctrinal position on Baptism and seem to be familiar with the subject, it has already been mentioned that some missionaries in Malawi do not seem to have a high priority of practicing baptism (FIGURE 3.6). In question 10, 19 out of 102 missionaries indicated that baptism was only “somewhat important” and six more said that it was not too important. The remaining 85 participants who answered question 10 indicated that Baptism was either “very important” or a “top priority” for missionaries.

Considering the number of participants who consider baptism to be so important, it is somewhat surprising that nearly half (47.5%) of them are not typically involved with baptism in Malawi. However, if that same question is filtered by those who identify themselves as pastors, Bible teachers, and evangelists, the figure is cut in half. Only 23.68 % of participants in those traditional roles are not typically involved in baptism. In fact, according the results from question 21, more than 90% (91.67%) of missionaries who are pastors, Bible teachers or evangelists had encouraged at least one or two new believers to be baptized over the past two years in Malawi. Those in roles that are primarily social action had a much lower percentage for the same question. Only about 60% (60.32%) of respondents identifying themselves as medical missionaries, general educators, agricultural trainers, mercy ministers, youth

workers, or support staff encouraged at least one or two new believers to be baptized over the past two years in Malawi. Those figures represent missionaries who met the minimum requirement of encouraging at least one person to be baptized over the past two years. From a broader perspective, less than 10% of the missionaries surveyed in Malawi baptize people regularly. This seems to indicate a disconnect between the belief that baptism is important and the practice of baptism among missionaries in Malawi. Some of Matthew 28:19-20 may have influenced more than 97% of missionaries in Malawi, but the baptism element of that passage doesn't seem to be a major influence in the practice of many missionaries.

What best describes your involvement with Baptism in Malawi?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I baptize people regularly.	9.9%	10
I occasionally baptize people.	8.9%	9
I often encourage people to be baptized.	17.8%	18
I occasionally encourage people to be baptized.	15.8%	16
I am not typically involved with baptism in Malawi.	47.5%	48
answered question		101
skipped question		2

Figure 3.11 – Question 17

One of the reasons why many missionaries may not be involved with baptism in Malawi is because they expect local churches to take that responsibility. In fact, in question 20, 71% of missionaries surveyed said they encourage new believers to be baptized in a local church in Malawi. Another 10% said that they encourage new believers to be baptized (and no church association is necessary). What is astonishing, however, is that the remaining 19% of missionaries surveyed don't usually encourage new believers to be baptized.



Figure 3.12 – Question 20

This is astonishing because both pedo-baptists and believer-baptists believe that new converts (who have not grown up in the church) should be baptized. It is astonishing because the Great Commission instructs believers to make disciples and part of that process involves baptizing. The reality that baptism is not high priority for many missionaries in practice becomes clear when missionaries are asked how many new believers they have encouraged to be baptized. In question 21 of the questionnaire, nearly 30% of missionaries surveyed said that they have not encouraged any new believers to be baptized in Malawi in the past two years. Another 20% said that they had only encouraged 1 or 2 individuals to be baptized in the past 2 years.

Please estimate how many new believers you have encouraged to be baptized over the past two years here in Malawi:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	28.3%	28
1-2	21.2%	21
3-9	19.2%	19
10-20	9.1%	9
More than 20	22.2%	22
answered question		99
skipped question		4

Figure 3.13 – Question 21

Ironically, in question 25, respondents were asked how important baptism is for being a good evangelical Christian and 94% of them responded either with “essential” or “important.” The wording for this question was taken directly from question 17 of the Evangelical Protestant Leaders Questionnaire that was developed by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and was given the attendees of the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town 2010. The only difference is that this researcher used the word “baptism” instead of other options that were in the Lausanne questionnaire (e.g. “tithing”).³⁰

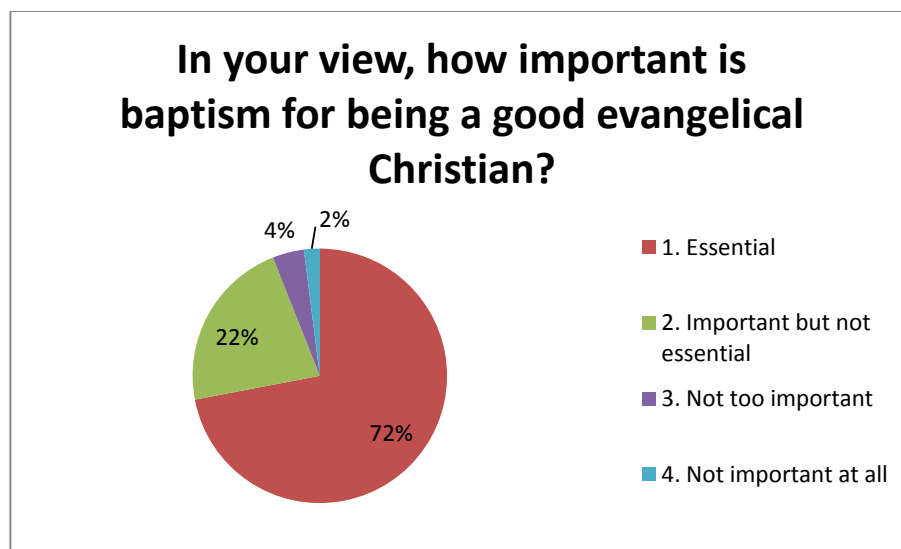


Figure 3.14 – Question 24D

Thus the reality is that, though 94% of the missionaries surveyed say that baptism is important, in practice nearly 50% of the same missionaries rarely encourage others to be baptized.

3.10.6 View and Involvement with Teaching

³⁰ The full questionnaire for the 2010 Lausanne conference as well as the results that have been posted by The Pew Forum are available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/06/22/global-survey-of-evangelical-protestant-leaders/> (accessed June 23, 2014).

While the percentages of respondents who are actively involved in baptism is relatively low compared to their view of baptism, the numbers for respondents involved in teaching are much higher. More than half of the missionaries surveyed say that they teach the Bible regularly.

What best describes your involvement with Teaching the Bible in Malawi?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I teach the Bible regularly.	54.4%	56
I occasionally teach the Bible.	21.4%	22
I often encourage people to be taught by those who teach the Bible.	12.6%	13
I occasionally encourage people to be taught by those who teach the Bible.	3.9%	4
I am not typically involved Bible teaching in Malawi.	7.8%	8
answered question		103
skipped question		0

Figure 3.15 – Question 18

While the number of respondents that teach regularly is encouraging, the number of hours that many of them spend in preparation to teach sheds light on the fact that many of them have other priorities that dominate their time more than teaching. This is not a good sign for the African church as teaching and training is one of the greatest needs for the church. As one African has written about local clergy and lay workers,

Unfortunately, they are not often well equipped theologically and practically for the ministry and mission. It consequently results in a superficial faith . . . Theological and Bible schools do not have sufficient infrastructure and curricula for contextual training for mission and ministerial formation. The training centres are simply seen as ‘passports’ for the ministry instead of a workshop which shapes for mission and ministry. Ministerial philosophy is not clearly formulated (Titre, 2008: 39).

In the chart below, the numbers at the tops of each column represent the number of respondents who prepare to teach. Note how the number of respondents decreases as the time of preparation increases past 1-2 hours per week of preparation and study time.

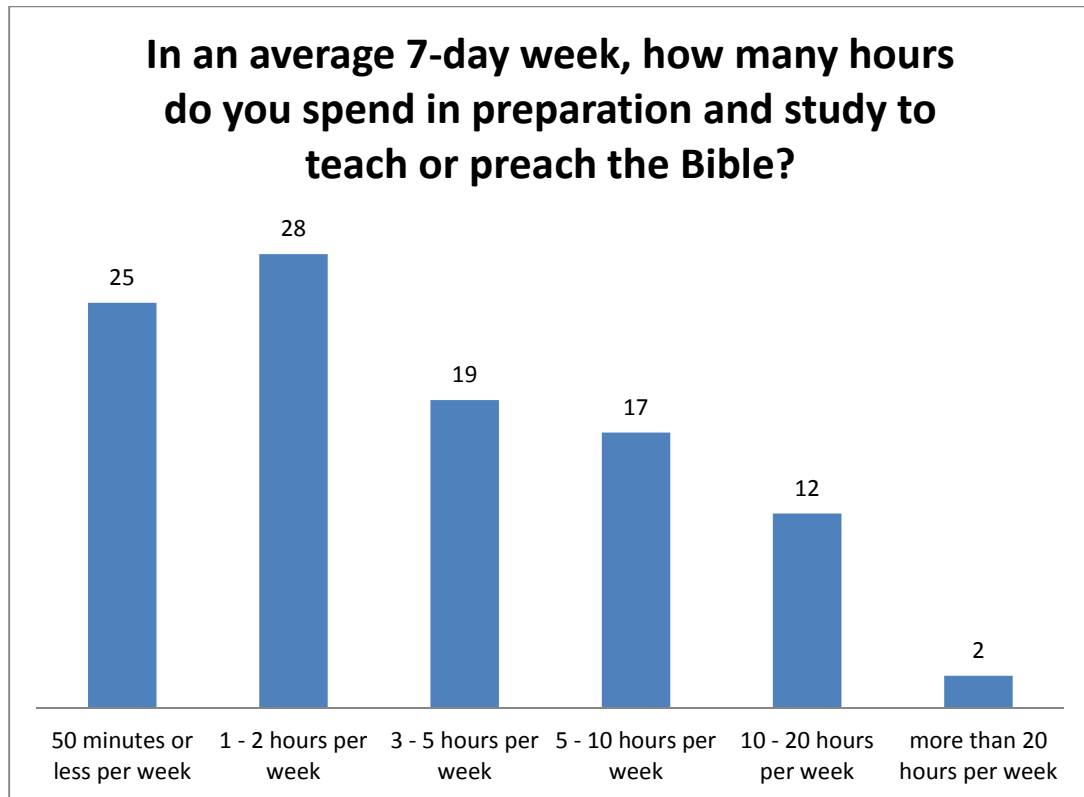


Figure 3.16 – Question 19E

One detail about the chart above is that it does not distinguish between proclamation primarily to those outside of the Christian faith as opposed to proclamation to those who are in the Christian faith. Traditional prioritism involves proclamation to both. In question 27, the respondents are asked how often they share their faith or views on God with people from other religions. 26.2% don't share their faith with those outside of the Christian faith even monthly. At best, they might share their faith several times a year but many of the missionaries surveyed said that they seldom or never share their faith in that way

Q.27 - Generally speaking, how often, if ever, do you do each of the following?					
Answer Options	At least once a week	Once or twice a month	Several times a year	Seldom	never
B. Share your faith or views on God with people from other religions	42%	32%	12%	12%	2%

Figure 3.17 – Question 27

Surprisingly, these percentages do not change drastically when those who identified themselves as Bible teachers, evangelists, and pastors are filtered out of question 27. One might expect that those missionaries who are more representative of traditional prioritism would be more active in sharing their faith with people from other religions. But 39% of those who are primarily involved in social action say that they share their faith with people from other religions at least once a week. Another 34% say that they share their faith once or twice a month. The remaining 27% are in the “several times a year,” “seldom,” or “never” categories (12.5%, 12.5%, and 2% respectively). This is sad news for both traditional prioritism as well as restrained holism because it means that more than 25% of missionaries are rarely sharing their faith with those outside of the Christian faith. The very idea of a missionary in the minds of many people is that a missionary is someone who shares their faith with others. Revisionist holism is not affected by missionaries who do not share their faith. For, as long as social action *or* gospel proclamation is taking place, revisionist holism is satisfied – both do not need to occur.

3.10.7 View and Involvement with Discipleship

Regarding discipleship, the majority of missionaries in Malawi encourage new believers to be discipled in a local church.

Which of the following best describes your involvement with discipleship?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I encourage new believers to be discipled in a local church here in Malawi.	78.8%	78
I encourage new believers to be discipled through an individual or an organization (and no church association is necessary).	18.2%	18
I don't usually encourage new believers to be discipled.	3.0%	3
answered question		99
skipped question		4

Figure 3.18 – Question 22

However, when it comes to personally discipling others, 31% of missionaries surveyed in Malawi are not currently discipling anyone in Malawi. That number jumps to 41% when the pastors, evangelists and Bible teachers from Question 11 are filtered out of the equation. This is a concern for traditional prioritism. Numerically speaking, social action efforts are outstripping gospel proclamation efforts when looked at through the lens of traditional prioritism.

Not including your own family members, choose the statement or statements below that describe your role with discipleship in Malawi? (more than one answer is possible)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I am currently discipling an Individual.	28.0%	28
I am currently discipling 2-6 people in a small group setting.	28.0%	28
I am currently discipling a group of more than 6 people In a group setting.	31.0%	31
I am not currently discipling anyone in Malawi.	31.0%	31
answered question		100
skipped question		3

Figure 3.19 – Question 23

It is surprising that 31% of missionaries in Malawi are not discipling anyone because on question 25, 99% of the missionaries surveyed indicated that discipleship was either essential or important. This is yet another revealing detail that practice does not measure up to verbalized ideals.

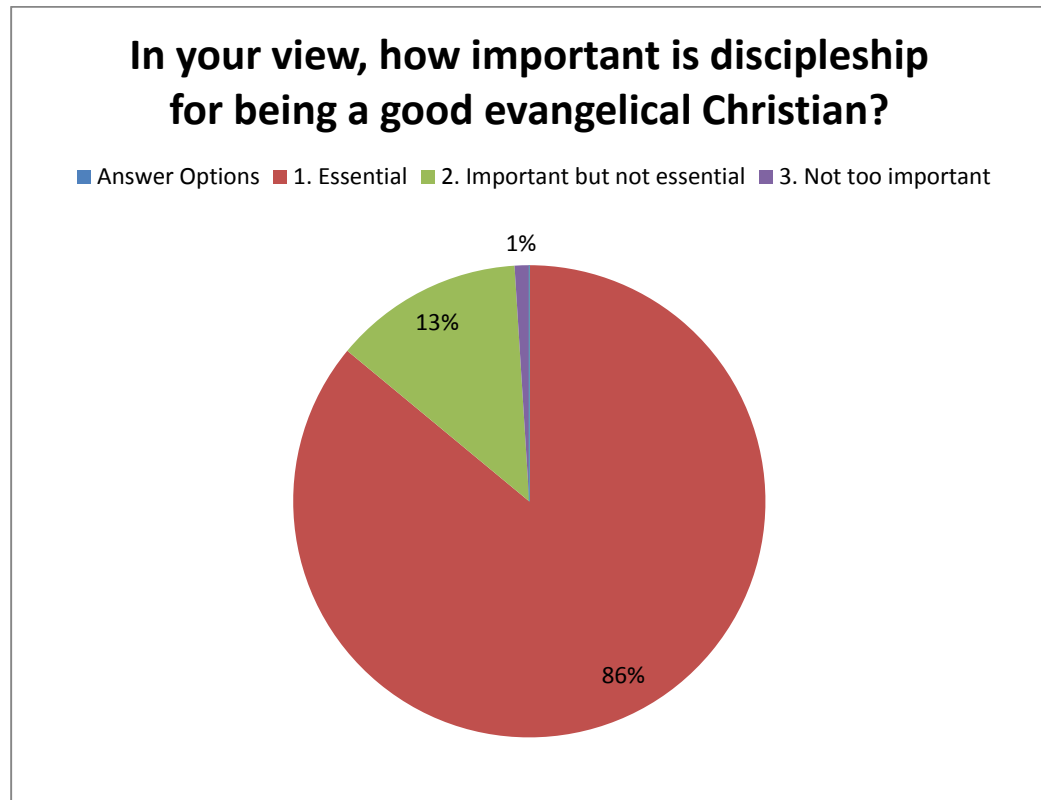


Figure 3.20 – Question 25I

3.10.8 Personal Information

Among the questions pertaining to personal information, there was a wide representation of individuals from various age groups and educational backgrounds. Regarding the ages of the missionaries surveyed, nearly half of them were under the age of 40.

What is your current age?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
A. 18-29	23.3%	24
B. 30-39	26.2%	27
C. 40-49	27.2%	28
D. 50-59	13.6%	14
E. 60 years and older	9.7%	10
answered question		103
skipped question		0

Figure 3.21 – Question 30

32% of the respondents were females while the remaining 68% were males. Most of the respondents were married, though more than one quarter of them were single.

Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Married	71.3%	72
Widowed	1.0%	1
Divorced	1.0%	1
Separated	0.0%	0
Never married	26.7%	27
answered question		101
skipped question		2

Figure 3.22 – Question 32

Educationally, 79.7% of the missionaries surveyed were university graduates with only 5.8% having not completed high school.

What is the highest level of education you have completed?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Did not complete high school	5.8%	6
Graduated from high school	5.8%	6
Some college	8.7%	9
Graduated from college	36.9%	38
Some graduate school	7.8%	8
Completed graduate school	35.0%	36
answered question		103
skipped question		0

Figure 3.23 – Question 35

Only 53.9% of the missionaries surveyed have received formal Bible training. This may confirm a trend that David J. Bosch predicted in his 1991 essays that were later published under the title, *“Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western*

Culture.” Bosch predicted that a missionary encounter with the West will have to be, primarily, a ministry of laity (1995: 59).

What kind of theological training have you received? (More than one answer is possible)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	20.6%	21
Independent, self-guided correspondence studies	16.7%	17
Informal training from a pastor or church leader	34.3%	35
Formal training at the following Bible school, college, or seminary:	53.9%	55
Name of Bible school, college, or seminary		53
answered question		102
skipped question		1

Figure 3.24 – Question 36

Among those missionaries serving in Malawi who have received formal theological training, the following institutions helped to educate them: Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Anderson School of Theology, NTM Missionary Training Center, Regent College, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Theological Seminary of Liebenzell Mission, Columbia International University, Southwestern Baptist Seminary, Pittsburg Theological Seminary, Asbury Theological Seminary, Calvin Theological Seminary, Vanguard College, Bethel University, International Christian College Glasgow, Cornerstone Seminary, Belfast Bible College – Northern Ireland, Assemblies of God School of Theology, The Redeemed Christian Bible College, Gordon-Conwell Theological College, Elim Bible Institute, Saint Paul’s Major Seminary, AMFC Bible School – Zimbabwe, Kalibu Ministries, Prairie Bible College and Graduate School, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Tennessee Temple University, New Covenant International, Southwestern Assemblies of God University, Eston College, Reformed Theological Seminary, Self Themes College, Biola University, Talbot School of Theology, Stellenbosch University, Covenant College, Pensacola Bible Institute, Fuller Seminary, California Theological Seminary, Tyndale Seminary, Liberty University, Grace Seminary, Christian Heritage College, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas Baptist University, The Master’s Seminary, and Trinity School of Missions.

The missionaries surveyed were working mostly in the Central Region of Malawi (60.8%). The Southern Region had 36.3% of the missionaries surveyed and the least populated area of Malawi, the Northern Region had only 2.9% of the total missionaries represented in the survey. The low number of missionaries in the northern region may be indicative of the fact that the northern region is the least populated region in Malawi. Only approximately 13% of Malawi's population resides in the northern region. The majority of the missionaries surveyed were originally sent from North America (64.1%). 19.4% of the missionaries surveyed came from Africa (including South Africa) and 13.6% were from Europe. Only 1% were from Australia, 1.9% from Asia, and no missionaries from South America participated in this study.

3.11 Conclusion

The results of this quantitative research indicate that both traditional prioritism and some form of holism are practiced in Malawi. The data is not conclusive as to whether the holism practiced is primarily restrained holism or revisionist holism, therefore it is best to view the two in the same category – holism. Missionaries in Malawi who fall into the category of traditional prioritism (those identified as pastors, Bible teachers, and evangelists) are most likely not going to be self-supporting missionaries. Rather, they are sent to Malawi from a church or organization outside of Malawi, probably from the West. These missionaries are familiar with Matthew 28:18-20 and 97% of them say that the Great Commission passage was influential in their decision to serve in Malawi. At least 90% of these missionaries believe that preaching and teaching of the Bible should be a top priority for missionaries in Malawi. However, only 38% of the missionaries in Malawi would classify themselves as serving in positions that are involved in preaching and teaching of the Bible as their primary ministry. While most missionaries in Malawi say that baptism is an important practice, only about half of the missionaries are involved in baptism on a regular basis. However, those missionaries who fall in to the category of traditional prioritism are much more likely to be baptizing and involved with baptism as about 90% of them have actually encouraged new converts to be baptized within the past two years. Missionaries who are representative of traditional prioritism have

more formal Bible training, they study the Bible more, teach the Bible more, and disciple individuals more than missionaries that are holistic.

Missionaries in Malawi who are representative of holistic mission make up the majority of missionaries in Malawi. These missionaries serve as medical missionaries, general educators, agricultural trainers, mercy ministers, youth workers, and support staff. The majority of holistic missionaries in Malawi are those serving as general educators or teachers in various primary and secondary schools in Malawi. In fact, there are about the same number of missionary school teachers in Malawi (36.9%) as there are traditional prioritism missionaries (pastors, evangelists, and Bible teachers) combined (37.8%). As might be expected, the holistic missionaries in Malawi have less formal Bible training; they study the Bible less; and they teach the Bible less than missionaries who represent traditional prioritism. If the holistic missionaries in Malawi were more representative of restrained holism than revisionist holism, one might expect that the holistic missionaries would be heavily involved in discipleship. A common image of a restrained holistic missionary is that he or she is working alongside people to help them with their physical needs and at the same time discipling the person or witnessing to them. Since more than 40% of holistic missionaries are not currently discipling anyone in Malawi it appears that close to half of them represent the practice of revisionist holism, though the data indicates that in theory, the majority of them would think of themselves as representative of restrained holism.

In short, compared to traditional missionaries in Malawi (pastors, Bible teachers, and evangelists), holistic missionaries in Malawi are less likely to be supported by a sending church, they have less experience as missionaries in Malawi, they are less influenced by Matthew 28:18-20, less involved in baptism, less involved in Bible teaching, less involved in Bible study, less involved in discipleship, less likely to share their faith with people from other religions, they are younger, fewer of them are married, and they have less theological training. This is holistic missionary work in Malawi.

Key Questions from the Survey	Holistic Missionaries (those identified in question 11 as medical missionaries, general educators, agricultural trainers, mercy ministers, youth workers, and support staff)	Traditional Prioritist Missionaries (those identified in question 11 as pastors, Bible teachers, and evangelists)
2.C. – I am a self supporting missionary.	32.26%	2.5%
4.A. – I have been serving in Malawi for less than 3 years.	53.13%	12.82%
16.D. – Matthew 28:18-20 is not very influential to my work here in Malawi.	4.76%	0%
17.E. – I am not typically involved with baptism in Malawi.	61.9%	23.68%
18.E. – I am not typically involved with Bible teaching in Malawi.	12.5%	0%
19.G. – I spend 50 minutes or less per week in preparation to teach or preach the Bible.	39.06%	0%
20.C. – I don't usually encourage new believers to be baptized.	25.40%	8.11%
21.A – I have not actually encouraged any new believers to be baptized over the past two years in Malawi.	39.68%	8.33%
22.C. – I don't usually encourage new believers to be disciplined.	4.92%	0%
23.D. – I am not currently discipling anyone in Malawi.	41.27%	13.51%
27.J and K – I seldom or never share my faith or views on God with people from other religions.	14.06%	12.82%
30.A and B – I am under the age of 40.	62.51%	28.21%
32.E – I have never been married.	37.10%	10.26%
36.E. – I have had no theological training.	28.57%	7.69%

Figure 3.25 – Key Survey Question

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL DISSEMINATION AND INTERPRETAION OF QUALITATIVE DATA DISCOVERED IN FOCUS GROUPS

4.1 Introduction

Through a theological study, Chapter 2 demonstrated that there is definite tension between those who view mission as primarily social action and those who view mission primarily as gospel proclamation. Chapter 2 also introduced three different positions regarding missionary practice: traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism. These three positions became the overall framework to evaluate the theological material in Chapter 2. Traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism also created a contextual platform to evaluate the quantitative empirical data in Chapter 3. This helped the researcher to gain a better perspective on missionaries in Malawi and how their familiarity with the Great Commission affects their priorities in mission.

Chapter 4 will present, interpret, and translate the empirical qualitative data collected by the researcher in focus groups. Once again, in this chapter, traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism will help create a platform to evaluate the data. The overall aim of this qualitative data is to determine if the tension expressed in the theological research and quantitative data is also expressed among church members from the United States who have an interest in supporting missionaries in Malawi. Key issues among those interviewed include: what is their definition and understanding of a missionary; how should the Great Commission influence the practice of missionaries sent out from churches in the U.S.; what should be the ministry priorities for missionaries in Malawi (in other words, what should take up most of their time and effort); to what extent should missionaries be involved in baptism; to what extent should they be involved in teaching; and how should baptism and teaching relate to discipleship?

4.2 Research Method

In order to evaluate the tensions, understandings, and motivations that underlie both mission as social action and mission as gospel proclamation, the researcher developed and administered a series of qualitative interview questions (see Annexure “B”). This interview was developed specifically for church members in the United States who have an interest in missionary work in Malawi. The survey was administered to 18 different individuals in three separate focus group meetings that met from February of 2013 – April of 2013. There were three focus groups and each group involved six of the 18 individuals. Each focus group met for approximately one hour. During this time, the researcher asked the interview questions for focus groups (Annexure “B”). All responses were audio recorded and later transcribed.

The rationale behind interviewing these individuals within the context of a focus group was to find out firsthand what the expectations and understandings were of western Christians regarding missionary work in Malawi. The researcher is aware that the comments and responses from the selected focus group members do not represent all western Christians, however those included in this sampling frame did meet certain criteria mentioned in the following section (4.3). Although the sampling frame is not statistically representative of the wider population of western Christianity, certain *theoretical generalizations* can be made. This approach to qualitative research suggests that because certain responses, attitudes, and beliefs are present within a smaller sampling frame, it is reasonable to conclude that the same responses, attitudes, and beliefs would be found in a larger body.

[Theoretical generalization] is a mode of generalizing that has more in common with empirical than theoretical logic. Having *no reason to suspect atypicality* is therefore usually viewed as an adjunct to stronger ways of generalizing theoretically, and ways which are more appropriate to qualitative research. You might therefore compare the characteristics of your sample of interviewees . . . to the characteristics of the wider population from which they were drawn, in order to be able to support a ‘no reason to suspect atypicality’ claim, or indeed to chart some of the dimensions on which your sample is indeed atypical (Mason, 2003: 195 emphasis hers).

Even in some cases where a sampling frame might be considered an extreme case, a set of issues could be explained if they are “central to a developing body of theory . . . and relevant to a ‘wider body of theory, knowledge or existence’” (Mason, 2003: 196). In this study, the sampling frame involved seminary students from The Master’s Seminary in California. As one surveys the responses to the questions relating to the Great Commission, social action, and gospel proclamation by the sampling frame, one can gain a better understanding of what practices and priorities many western Christians might have for missionaries in Malawi.

4.3 Sampling/Population

The researcher used a nonprobability sampling method that included purposive or judgmental sampling. Seminary students were purposely chosen as a subset from the larger population of western Christians because they are knowledgeable about issues surrounding gospel proclamation, social action, and missions.

In some instances, you may wish to study small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified, but the enumeration of all of them would be nearly impossible. For example, you might want to study the leadership of a student protest movement; many of the leaders are easily visible, but it would not be feasible to define and sample all leaders, you may collect data sufficient for your purposes (Babbie, 1998: 195).

In this study, these seminary students (and future church leaders) were not only available, visible, and accessible, but the fact that they had a deeper knowledge about the issues relating to this study was helpful. Indeed, many western Christians have not thought much about the issues pertaining to this study and some of them are not familiar with the country of Malawi.

Certain criteria were desired for this sampling population. Firstly, 100% of them needed to profess to be Christians. Secondly, more than 50% of them should be in full time Christian ministry or preparing to be pastors, missionaries, and ministers of the gospel. Thirdly, more than 50% of them should be from a western country originally and 100% of them should be in a western country while being interviewed. In addition, more than 50% of them should all have an interest in missionary work

specifically in Malawi. This researcher was able to find groups of people that met the above qualifications at the Master's Seminary in Southern California. The individuals were all seminary students at The Master's Seminary during the 2013 academic school year.

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

Research assistants were not used in the data collection procedure for this qualitative study. Rather, the researcher himself led the discussion among the focus groups and asked the interview questions. Each focus group was recorded using a digital recorder. The recordings were later transcribed by two employed typists. An example of one of the typed transcripts can be found in Annexure "I."

4.5 Profile of Respondents

The 18 respondents for the qualitative study were all seminary students who attended The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California at the time of the interview. Originally, the majority of the respondents hailed from various places in the United States. One was originally from Canada, and another from the Philippines. The churches they originally came from include: Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA, Community Christian Alliance Church, Northridge, CA, Christian Chinese Church, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Calvary Bible Church, Haley, ID, Parker Bible Church, Parker, CO, The Anchor Bible Church, Redmonds, CA, Chinese Bible Church, West L.A., CA, Lake Hills Community Church, Castaic, CA, Southern Baptist Church, NC, Terrell Bible Church, Terrell, TX, Grace Bible Church, Sacramento, CA, Jubilee Ministries, Sacramento, CA, and Grace Church, Kingsburg, CA.

Each of the respondents indicated the career that they aspire to enter following their graduation from seminary. Eight of the respondents desire to be serving full time in pastoral ministry. Another five respondents indicated that they would like to be involved in missionary work or church planting. Three of the respondents said that

they would like to be involved in teaching theology at academic institutions. The remaining two respondents were interested in chaplaincy.

For the sake of anonymity, the data from each of the 18 respondents will remain coded for the remainder of this project. Each respondent has been assigned an alpha-numeric code that is untraceable except in the researcher's private records.

4.6 Pilot Study/Pre-Testing

According to Kevin Gary Smith's guide for students doing theological research, a pilot study not only helps to "gather information about deficiencies in the questionnaire and ideas for improving it," but it also "provides the questionnaire, as a research instrument, with greater validity" (2008: 235-236). In this study, the interview was administered to a volunteer group of Christians involved in missions at a church in Burbank, California. None of the members of the pilot study were candidates for the other focus groups.

4.7 Research Ethics

All eighteen of the participants selected for this project signed an informed consent document (see Annexure D) prior to participating in the interview. The informed consent form explained the topic of the study, the purpose of the study, various procedures and risks, as well as information about participation and confidentiality. This informed consent document was presented to the ethics committee at Stellenbosch University and approved as a "low risk" study (see Annexure E for the approval letter). Those participants who filled out their survey online were emailed a copy of the informed consent document and were asked to respond with an email acknowledging the information about the survey and consenting voluntarily to participate in the study. All signed consent forms and emails are printed out and on file with the researcher.

4.8 Research Objectives

“All research is directed by a research problem or objective. In a theological thesis, the main research problem will govern the objective of the descriptive component of the study” (Smith, 2008: 230). The primary objective of this qualitative research interview is to gain more insight on perspective of some western Christians on the Great Commission (as presented in Matthew 28:18-20) and how it relates to missionary work in Malawi.

4.9 Related Research

As already mentioned, in Chapter 2, three different positions relating to missionary practice were introduced. A brief explanation of these positions is once again warranted in this chapter. Traditional prioritism holds that while social action has an important place in missionary practice, gospel proclamation must be the priority. Restrained holism is more holistic in that it views missionary practice as consisting of an equal partnership between social action and gospel proclamation. Revisionist holism takes the issue a step further because it holds that either gospel proclamation or social action are viable priorities – whatever benefits human welfare is a valid priority for Revisionist holism.

The question at hand with this qualitative study relates to the viewpoints of western Christians and missionary work. According to their perspective, should current missionary work in Malawi reflect traditional prioritism, restrained holism, or revisionist holism? As the empirical data are reviewed, they will be viewed through the lenses of these three positions to determine which position is preferred among focus group members.

4.10 Empirical Dissemination and Interpretation

The empirical data were examined cross-sectionally. That is to say that after the data were transcribed, they were manually placed in into various columns where the researcher was able to consistently index the data provided by the focus groups using

common measures. In addition to a literal reading, the data were also read in an interpretive and reflexive manner. According to Jennifer Mason, in her book, *Qualitative Researching*,

Whatever your view on the possibility or otherwise of literal readings, you will need to consider to what extent you will want to make an interpretive reading of your data. An interpretive reading will involve you in constructing or documenting a version of what you think the data mean or represent, or what you think you can infer from them. . . . A reflexive reading will locate you as part of the data you have generated, and will seek to explore your role and perspective in the process of generation and interpretation of data. You will probably see yourself as inevitably and inextricably implicated in the data generation and interpretation process, and you will therefore seek a reading of the data which captures or expressed those relationships (2003: 149).

As the data were interpreted, certain indexing categories were used in order to organize the data in such a way that it could be measured using a common set of principles or measures. Ten categories in all were used. Key passages, the emphasis of Matthew 28:18-20, the process of discipleship, the perception and understanding of missionary activity, missionary expectations and ideals, the definition of the term 'missionary,' the priorities of mission, social action towards those outside of the church, financial support for social action, and a concern for change all comprised the categories for interpretation.

According to Mason, a researcher should be aware of three limitations to categorical indexing. The first limitation involves categories that are too broad to be useful. The second is that one qualitative text may be able to provide data for more than one category. Thirdly, this type of "indexing is unlikely to work very well in qualitative texts which do not have a uniform layout or follow an ordered sequence, or in non-text-based data" (2003: 151). The third limitation does not apply directly to this text-based qualitative data and the first two limitations were noted by the researcher as he processed and interpreted the data.

Indexing or retrieving text in qualitative research can either been done manually or with the assistance of computer aided qualitative data analysis. Both methods have

advantages and disadvantages. One disadvantage of manual analysis is that it is labor intensive. One disadvantage of computer aided analysis is that it can create too many categories. Because the qualitative data were similar in context (all transcripts from focus groups) this research opted to analyze the data manually.

The empirical data will be presented, evaluated and interpreted in light of 1) the three missionary positions as presented in section 3.9; 2) the theological conclusions from chapter 2; and 3) the conclusions from the quantitative empirical research of chapter 3. These three research dimensions will provide the necessary context for interpreting the qualitative data for this project.

4.10.1 Key Passages

The participants in each focus group were asked to identify on their own key passages that relate to missionary work. The purpose of this question was to establish that the participants were indeed familiar with Matthew 28:18-20 and its importance for missionary work. The researcher specifically asked: **When you think about missionary work, is there a particular passage that sticks out in your mind?**

A number of passages were mentioned from individual members of each focus group, including Romans 10:17; Mark 10; 3 John; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:15; 2 Timothy 2. However, the only passage to be mentioned in more than one focus group was Matthew 28:18-20. In fact, at least one person from each focus group mentioned that Great Commission passage (though some of them did not give the exact reference, it was clear that they were all speaking about the same passage). Specifically, participants made the following statements:

“... Matthew 28:19-20 because it kind of gives a command to go out and do it so that’s what comes to my mind when I think about it.” (A5)

“... The Great Commission where Jesus says “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”- the all nations part comes very naturally with missions when we think of that because it encompasses going throughout the world and making disciples.” (B4)

“ . . . I think of Matt 28:16–18, the Great Commission. The first thing comes to mind . . . ” (C4)

When asked if each person in each focus group was familiar with that Matthew 28 passage, two of the three focus groups all responded “yes.” One member of one focus group asked to be reminded of the passage and so the interviewer quoted the passage.

4.10.2 Discerning the Emphasis of Matthew 28:18-20

In order to establish a platform to discuss various aspects of missionary priorities, the respondents in the focus groups were asked: **Thinking about Matthew 28:19-20, what is the main emphasis of that text? What is it telling us to do, or telling the church to do, or what is Jesus telling his disciples to do?** More than one person responded in some of the groups but all of the responses were strikingly similar. Each response identified the main emphasis of Matthew 28:18-20 as discipleship and several respondents identified the dependent participles as well. No responses were given that did not discuss discipleship. The responses included the following:

“ . . . make disciples (more than one answered), yes, I agree with that, and in conjunction with that, teach them to do and obey what Christ has taught to be disciples.” (A5)

“Growing up I understood that it was going, but the realization that it is making disciples, and three participles that follow, which would be: baptizing and teaching, actually *going* there (being a participle) that is all encompassing of what it means to make disciples.” (B3)

“That’s the way I would’ve thought too and that’s how I was going for a long time, because it was taught that way to me, but after learning under a few other guys and learning the original language there, the participle is ‘going’ and the primary verb is ‘making disciples’. So, it involves not just evangelistic messages, but it involves the building up of the church across the entire globe, as it is referring to.” (B5)

“ . . . Telling the disciples to make disciples . . . That’s the main thing.” (C5)

“ . . . In that disciple process, teaching and baptizing being key element of it, all of course, directed Jesus Christ.” (C6)

It was clear from the responses of the participants that they were not only familiar with Matthew 28, but they understood its emphasis to be one of making disciples. Some members even emphasized the point that teaching and baptism are descriptive words that help bring out the meaning of discipleship.

4.10.3 The Process of Discipleship

Following up on the emphasis of Matthew 28:18-20, a key question is: **How do you make disciples?** Without leading the respondents to bring up issues of proclamation or social action most of the respondents replied with statements about proclamation.

“... the obvious first step is conversion, you cannot make a disciple unless the person is converted to Christ, so I would say that is a necessary step. From there, we teach the Word and trust the Lord with His sanctifying work in their lives. That's certainly the process of making disciples.” (A3)

“... You make disciples by passing on what you know, by replicating a body of knowledge, or a life. 2 Timothy 2:2-4 is probably a good text for discipleship. ‘What you have heard from me, in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to thank the men who will be able to teach others.’ So it’s just a multiplication of entrusting a body of knowledge or a life to multiply.” (B4)

“... According to the passage, teaching them, (C4) said preaching, but I think teaching, it says there in verse 20, observing all that I commanded you so there’s an element of evangelism but also teaching sound doctrine as well.” (C2)

One respondent did also mention that some sort of action must also accompany the proclamation.

“... Also, in addition really, alongside with the teaching there, is scripture that’s modeling of how to obey the word taught, and how to obey the things that you’re teaching. For example, when Paul is passing it on to Timothy, he tells him to emulate not only what he taught, but also the way he lived out what he taught. So this disciple making has to do with the teaching of the truth under scripture, and also modeling in your life how it is lived out.” (B1)

While the majority of respondents only thought of proclamation type ministry as being associated with discipleship, the above respondent brings up a good point. He acknowledges that some sort of action accompanies the teaching. No other respondents disagreed with him.

4.10.4 Perception and Understanding of Missionary Activity

In order to establish the perceptions and understanding of church members that support missionary activity, the following question was asked: **What are the primary activities of missionaries that your church supports? What do missionaries do, actually on the ground?** A variety of responses were made and all 18 respondents commented on their churches' missionary programs. Two of the respondents came from churches that did not have active missionary programs (either because their churches were too young or too small). Of the remaining 16 respondents, 10 of them indicated that their churches' mission programs focused on proclamation and teaching missionary work. Though some other activities were mentioned (especially for missionaries in countries that were closed to gospel proclamation – therefore, the missionaries went into those countries with other vocations), the predominant answer generally included something that related to proclamation ministry. Respondents used words such as “the main focus,” “the forefront,” “a strong emphasis,” “mostly involved,” and “primarily involved” to describe the proclamation work that the missionaries were involved in. It was clear from this question that most of the respondents perceived that missionaries from their church held to a traditional prioritism model of mission. Some of their comments were:

“... At our church, there's a strong emphasis on sending pastors that have training organizations. So they train the pastors and then those pastors can shepherd their flocks.” (A1)

“It's really to go and to train up nationals in different places and to bring people in line with the true gospel who have the language and dialect of the people and then building up native pastors who can then carry that commission on.” (A2)

“... To my knowledge, our missionaries are primarily involved in pastoral ministry and training church leaders.” (B2)

“... The primary involvement there is for church planting, through home discipleship, and just planting new local churches once the area or space becomes too small.” (B3)

“... Our church hosts a number of different missionaries, some stateside who do church development. Then some who do foreign missions, specifically tribal church planting, going into indigenous people groups, learning the language, translating Scripture into their language and then with the express purpose of planting a church. . .” (C2)

Though there were more responses that related to traditional prioritism than restrained holism and revisionist holism, there were some holistic responses. Some respondents noted that their churches were involved in social action ministries. For example:

“... The missionaries that my church supports are all across the board. One works in Christian radio in Ecuador, others do community work in China, others are doctors in Pakistan. Others teach English in China; all different kinds of things.” (B4)

“... There is a large emphasis on medical services, voluntary medical services as well as professional services. Anywhere from legal to teaching English or education in foreign countries, agricultural development, very hands on, more practical based. And then the gospel is put in on the side. Missions is thought of as those services to the people.” (C1)

Among the respondents, there were at least two who did not know what the missionaries whom their churches support were doing. In fact, there was some disappointment expressed about the lack of transparency on the part of the churches and how they communicate their missionary activity to the congregation. As one respondent notes:

“... You know, in our church there was not a lot of emphasis on telling us what they were doing. . . Yeah, that was disappointing. I had asked some questions and some of the answers I got back from the missionaries was more of a helps-oriented approach. Building/putting wells in the ground for fresh water, bathrooms, things of that sort. Building farms so that people can be self-supporting, self-sustaining so that the church or the organization could be. In South American, I can’t remember the name of the... this shows you the disconnect, I can’t remember the name of the missionaries or the exact location. . .” (A4)

In addition to perceptions about what missionaries supported by the respondents home churches should be doing, a question was asked about any missionaries that the respondents might support personally. **Do any of you support individual missionaries (other than in your general giving)? If so, what are the missionaries doing that you support?** Three respondents (one from each focus group) indicated that they, personally, support overseas missionaries. Two of the three indicated that the missionaries that they support are involved primarily in proclamation and teaching ministries.

“... I support the [name redacted] in Uganda and what they do specifically is they train pastors, so they hold pastors’ conferences so that pastors all over the country come. And they’re working on a project to have a full-time seminary so that pastors can come, be equipped and go back to their individual villages.” (A1)

“... We support the [name redacted, missionaries in Malawi] ... and they’re allowing, or involved in the local church there as well as teaching, I believe it’s training pastors, and starting up a seminary so it’s the beginning stages of that.” (B4)

The third respondent indicated that the missionaries that he and his wife support are involved in support ministry for those who will be doing gospel proclamation.

“... We support missionaries that are in fact leaving next week to do tribal church planting in Indonesia. They’re with an organization “New Tribes Missions” that focus primarily on tribal missions, unreached people groups and they will be doing church...they won’t be doing church planting in the tribe, they will be doing support. Specifically setting up solar systems, Internet, all of the logistical needs that a missionary would need in order to go into a tribe.” (C2)

4.10.5 Missionary Expectations and Ideals

Once perceptions of missionary activity have been verbalized, a natural follow-up question for a western Christian relates to his or her expectations and ideals of what missionaries *should* be doing. The members of each focus group were asked: **What do you believe should be the primary activity of a missionary?** In all three focus groups, the responses unanimously pointed towards proclamation ministry. Traditional prioritism was described by the participants:

“ . . . Church planting should be. If you’re not planting church, I wouldn’t... It’s not that I wouldn’t call them missionaries, but I think they would be missing the goal of why they’re there.” (A3)

“ . . . preaching, going, preaching, teaching, establishing churches that are well-equipped and prepared to run on their own and moving on.” (A4)

“ . . . in the New Testament . . . it was a ministry to make disciples and to spread the word of God to help people become obedient to the truth. So it’s a ministry of truth, so that’s why there’s a lot of teachers involved, but it’s also a living among them and abiding with them, so they can help grow them to become more like Jesus Christ.” (B5)

“ . . . if [a] missionary is stationed in an area where there is no Bible and there is no Word, then perhaps the main emphasis should be Bible translation. But then in other countries where everyone’s literate, and they have access to a Bible, the emphasis may shift a little to evangelism and pastoral ministry. Perhaps it’s an area where there are churches, they just don’t have leaders to take charge of those churches, then perhaps leadership training should be the emphasis.” (B2)

“ . . . [Missionaries] need to be about preaching and teaching so that people are brought to faith in Christ and brought to maturity in Christ. So discipleship must be continuous both before conversion and after.” (C6)

Recognizing that none of the respondents mentioned social action or the kind of activity that is represented in holistic mission work, the researcher asked a point blank question about the validity of social action in the church. The focus groups were asked: **Do you all believe that the church should be involved in social action?** Surprisingly, the emphasis of the conversation shifted towards one where restrained holism language dominated the discussion. It was amazing how the majority of the members of the focus groups had previously said that missionaries should be predominantly about proclamation (affirming traditional prioritism) (see 4.10.5 *Missionary Expectations and Ideals*). But, when a direct question about social action was asked, seven out of eleven respondents made clear statements that were more reflective of holistic mission work than traditional prioritism. Really, only three respondents made clear statements that reflected traditional prioritism because one of the eleven respondents who answered this question was still trying to think through the issue. Some of the statements that reflected holistic mission work were:

“ . . . I think that the church can use social interaction as a means to ministering to people without Christ.” (B2)

“ . . . I think it's both. I don't think that you could separate the two. It is primarily word ministry because there's no way for someone to know the gospel apart from it being preached. So, word ministry is primary. But if we truly believe what we're preaching then the good deeds are going to follow from that.” (B6)

“ . . . we find in the Bible in Galatians 2:10 when Paul is accepted by the apostles and they tell him they can go and share the gospel, ‘only they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.’ I think that's a very good text to see preaching the gospel, but it's also very important to remember those who are in need also.” (B4)

“ . . . You can't pour all of your time into just social or just Gospel, but they must both be included to do one and not the other is to ultimately do one of them or both of them wrong and . . . you're not loving your neighbor if you're not socially interacting with him in some way as a body, as a missionary. And by just giving them social interaction or social lift-up is being wrong in that you're not sharing the gospel which is their most primary need. So to do either one of them less or to not do one of them would be wrong.” (C3)

Among those who reflected traditional prioritism, some clear statements were also made:

“ . . . I do think we must be a speaking people. That is our primary emphasis, to actually speak the gospel to people. But as far as social action, that is a demonstration of the change that the gospel does bring.” (B3)

“ . . . I think if we look at the Gospels or the Apostles, the lives of the Apostles we always see proclamation of the gospel taking the paramount place of their ministry and of their lives. And what follows or is entailed is this social ministry that naturally accompanies that.” (C1)

“ . . . it's interesting how on that Galatians passage [Galatians 6:10] how it's kind of a byproduct of the actual goal of his ministry. So the goal of his ministry, was what he was doing for the sake of the gospel, because I think the underlying assumption is that the souls of the people he's ministering to are of the greatest importance, and then secondarily, don't forget that these are real people who have needs in this world, and that God cares about those things.” (B5)

4.10.6 Defining the Term “Missionary”

There are many terms being used among missionaries today that are ambiguous. In a recent book entitled *Mission Shift* (edited by David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer), the first third of the book attempts to define and describe the terms *mission*, *missions*, *missional*, *mission Dei*, and *missionary*. Charles Van Engen, Keith Eitel, Enoch Wan, Darrell L. Guder, Andreas Kostenberger, and Ed Stetzer all interact with one another’s definitions of these terms. The result was a lengthy discussion that demonstrated the fact that even veteran missiologists find it difficult to agree on definitions. In fact, in somewhat of a tongue-in-cheek manner, Stetzer concluded his chapter by gently mocking Van Engen with the words, “We need . . . a ‘cohesive, consistent, focused, theologically deep, missiologically broad, contextually appropriate, and praxeologically effective, evangelical missiology.’” (2010: 80).

Etymologically, Willem Saayman has noted that the term *missionary* has its roots in *missio Dei* which means “the sending of God” in Latin (2010:9). Historically, the adjective *missionary* has been synonymous with *missional*, though Saayman says that in recent years *missional* has taken on a new meaning in North America which refers more to home mission than to foreign mission. Furthermore, some suggest that on a world wide scale, “the term *missionary* has a specific unpleasant and offensive history which gives rise to the desire to ‘rebrand’ [or transform]” the adjective *missionary* to *missional* (Saayman, 2010:15). While that may clear up some distinction with adjectival use of the terms, the term *missionary* as a noun is still vague for many people.

In spite of the difficulty many missiologists have in trying to define terms, a good exercise to try to determine one’s perspective about missions is to discuss the meaning of the term “missionary.” More specifically, it is beneficial to ask the question: “**Could you define what a missionary is?**” Invariably, when this researcher has asked this question (not only within the setting of a focus group but in other settings as well (i.e. – a classroom setting, casual conversation with individuals), people tend to waffle in their definition. They begin with a simple definition but as they think about it more, they begin to expand that definition. Ask them a follow-up

question (i.e. – “Are all Christians missionaries?”) and they often circle back to their original definition and try to make changes.

One of the reasons why it is difficult to define the term *missionary* is because the term has been used so broadly to describe so many different activities of the church. As early as 1598 but almost universally by 1729 the term missionary referred to someone sent out from the church with the goal of fulfilling the Great Commission (Moreau, Netland, Engen, & Burnett, 2000: 636). However, in the 1920’s some debate began to evolve over the definition and the controversy really came to a peak in the late 1960’s- early 1970’s. Regarding the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsalla in 1968, it has been noted that

practically everything was brought under the umbrella-term ‘mission’ – health and welfare services, youth projects, activities of political interest groups, projects for social development, constructive application of violence, combating racism, the introduction of the inhabitants of the Third World to the possibilities of the twentieth century, and the defence of human rights. (Bosch, 1980: 11)³¹

Bosch points out that historically, mission work was generally associated with proclamation. In fact, for some, mission was virtually synonymous with evangelism. “Sometimes the difference was deemed to be merely geographical in nature. ‘Mission’ was something we did in far-off, pagan, countries; ‘evangelism’ was something for our own environment” (1980: 12). Bosch’s observation is part of the reason why traditional prioritism is ‘traditional.’ Historically, mission was associated closely with proclamation. However, as Bosch points out in reference to the modern view of missions:

These most recent developments have, nevertheless, made one important contribution: they have broken with the earlier view according to which both mission and evangelism had to do only with verbal proclamation of the gospel. The one difference, in the older

³¹ It should be noted that in Bosch’s 1980 work *Witness to the World*, evangelism was seen as a central element of mission while in his later work, *Transforming Mission* (1991), evangelism was listed among eleven dimensions of mission. Bosch said, “Mission is a multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, reconciliation, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization, and much more” (1991: 512).

definition, was that the objects of mission and evangelism were distinguished (1980: 12).

Today, there are basically three³² main views on the term “missionary.” These three views correspond to the three perspectives on mission. Traditional prioritism says that mission is fulfilling the Great Commission – and the focus is developing thriving churches around the world. Restrained holism says that the Christian mission is both evangelism and social action. Revisionist holism says that social action alone can be mission just as evangelism alone can be mission, neither takes priority over the other (Moreau, Netland, Engen, & Burnett, 2000: 638).

When this researcher asked those in the focus groups if they could define what a missionary was, some of the respondents gave basic definitions that might be a description of any follower of Christ. For example:

“... a missionary for God is a person who is carrying God’s missions; He’s a working disciple in places.” (C5)

“... a missionary is a traveling Christian. A Christian should be a missionary in the sense of making disciples. That should be our goal wherever we live and maybe that’s not the most accurate definition but I’ve always perceived missionaries as Christians in different places doing what Christians ought to be doing.” (A2)

When the researcher heard these broad definitions, he followed up by asking: **Would you say that the term ‘missionary’ is synonymous with the term ‘Christian?’** At that point, one of the respondents (C5) who gave a broad definition of the term missionary affirmed that they were, in a sense, synonymous.

³² J. J. Kritzinger reduces all definitions into two basic classifications (narrow and broad). He says, “In general the narrow definition would imply that mission is first and foremost (and almost only) interested in the spiritual salvation of the sinner (the soul). The means of mission are therefore preaching, witnessing, proclamation. . . . Those who hold the broader view of mission would prefer to say that while the above is generally speaking acceptable, it represents only an aspect of mission, even if it is an essential (yes: even the primary) dimension of mission. But mission is more than just the conscious communication of the gospel, just as a person is more than just a soul. Mission encompasses and addresses the whole of life, soul, *and body*. Therefore, the missionary task will also include aspects of service in day to day life for which there is no room in the above view” (Kritzinger, 1988: 33-34).

“I think every Christian should be the missionary in some sense by going because Jesus in Matthew 28:19–20, it’s basically telling his Disciples whoever following Him should be His disciple and they are going out as the missionary.” (C5)

However, others in that same focus group spoke up and expressed descriptions of a missionary with more specificity. In fact, there were a few from the different focus groups that expressed the idea that a missionary is someone who goes to an unreached people group. For example, in response to C5’s broad definition above:

“I don’t know if I’d necessarily go that far to say all are missionaries, at least maybe not biblically but where I’ve seen it work out is differently. I know in Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were sent out from the church at Antioch. They had their hands laid on those men and were sent out for a purpose - versus just a general command to go out and share the Gospel and make disciples. Those are what they did when they went into different cities. They started in the synagogues and worked their way out into other locations but they started first by being sent out by being sent out from a church. They were commissioned to carry that Great Commission to other locations that had not heard.” (C4)

In another group a respondent described a missionary as someone who is sent to a place where the gospel is not strongly established:

“I would clarify and say not just going somewhere where the senders aren’t, but somewhere where the gospel is not strongly established. You could go somewhere where the senders aren’t but the gospel is already established there.” (B6)

In each focus group, there was not a clear consensus among the members of what a missionary is. Still trying to encourage the groups to be more unified in their definitions, the researcher posed the following scenario: **Suppose that your church supported a school teacher to go to a place like Malawi to share the love of Christ by teaching school children things like math, English, and science. Let’s say that another person from your church decided to go on his own to the same school in Malawi and he was hired by that school to teach the same subjects – but he did not receive any support from your church – would you consider that both of the teachers are indeed missionaries?**

In response to this scenario there were a number of responses and their positions varied. Half of the respondents (6 out of 12) did not have a clear position. They included words like “this is difficult” or “in one sense ‘yes,’ but in another sense ‘no,’” Two examples of responses like this are:

“It’s kind of a tricky question I guess, because I think it has to do with God’s view of that person and that point, and man’s perception of what they’re doing. I mean, I think both can be viewed as missionaries. Some people would say that they would be, some would say that they’re not... and it just depends if one is and one’s not. It depends on why they’re there and whether they’re really fulfilling the work of a missionary.” (B5)

“I would agree that our difficulty as [B1] said is with the term missionary because it is so new to our culture in a broad spectrum in church history. Just looking at Acts 13, it’s very obvious of the five teachers who are in the church of Antioch, and only Paul and Barnabas are actually separated out, and that is a process that is done by the Holy Spirit from the local congregation and then they are sent off to unreached peoples. So in a general sense I would agree, but some, all Christians in a general sense, are missionaries in that we display and take God’s mission to unreached peoples; whether that be in our local communities or around the world. But in a church sense, I would say that certain missionaries, whether financially supported or not, are the ones that the Holy Spirit separates out to send to those unreached people groups.” (B3)

Four of the respondents said that both of the candidates in the scenario provided did qualify as missionaries. These respondents maintained their position from the previous question that the term ‘missionary’ and ‘Christian’ are indeed synonymous.

“I would say if both of them are there for the primary purpose of making disciples, of spreading the gospel, I would say that they are both missionaries because if our definitions hold, then it isn’t what matters, whether you receive a constant support from the churches, but whether or not you’re there to make disciples. Paul many times, didn’t receive from the churches that he left; he ended up receiving from the churches that he went to. So it doesn’t make or break whether or not you’re a missionary if you’re receiving money from a church I would say.” (B1)

“I think what you said in the question, you said “love of Christ.” I think that phrase defines what the person does wherever they are. If the teacher goes and demonstrates the love of Christ as she/he teaches, and

makes disciples then that's missionary work and I think if a person comes subsequent to the teacher being there and demonstrates of the life of Christ, then that's missionary work as well. I think it's sometimes formal in the sense that we say "missionaries" and then we send them out to do missionary work but like you said, the overarching effort is demonstrating the life of Christ and doing what Christ did and being what Christ was and just letting Christ's life shine through that person and make disciples of the folks we come in contact with. Yeah, we call it "missionaries" and all of that but the bottom line is doing what Christ instructed us to do. [INTERVIEWER– Would you say that the term "Christian" and "missionary" are synonymous?] Yeah. [INTERVIEWER–So all Christians are missionaries?] Should be."

Two of the respondents essentially said 'no.' They did not view both candidates in the scenario to be true missionaries. According to these respondents, only the candidate sent out from a local church could truly carry the title *missionary*.

"The one who didn't receive support, and I'd even go so far as to say, affirmation from the church would be an illegitimate missionary because it's the church that lays hands (Acts 13) on people to go do that. It affirms their character, affirms their calling. So without the affirmation of the local church which would be financially supported as well, incumbent or connected to financial support, they're not a legitimate missionary." (C4)

"Third John appears to show that there's an intrinsic link between those who are sent in partnership with people from some sort of local church or body and so I would agree with [C4]." (C1)

Even though no clear consensus was reached in any of the focus groups regarding the definition of the term 'missionary,' the responses contributed to a broad definition. Most respondents expressed the idea that in the truest sense of the word, a missionary is someone who is sent. However, a more relevant question regarding protestant missionaries is, 'what are they sent to do?'

4.10.7 The Priorities of Mission

In order to establish the recognition of priorities in missions, a question was asked relating to a recent history of missionary work. Each focus group was asked: **Do you think there is a difference today in the primary activities of missionaries today than that of missionaries 40-50 years ago?** The overwhelming response from the

focus groups was that in recent years, there has been a decrease in proclamation. Historically, according to the focus groups, missionary activity has required more preparation in proclamation, and more preaching on the mission field. Below are two examples of participants who articulated that view when they were asked if there is a difference today:

“Preaching . . . I think that, and obviously making disciples, but the first image that comes to mind when I was raised in the church is of men who would come through Bible college and went [out] preaching. One of the reasons I remember that too, now, I recently had a conversation with my dad who was talking about all these missionaries now that don’t prepare before they go to the mission field. They get the feeling that they really need to go help. They get on a plane and go and ask for money and they’re sent and he just said, ‘That’s crazy.’ He said, ‘in our day, it would take a missionary sometime six, eight years to prepare, to learn something of the culture and the language and to be in seminary and be doing all these things.’ And so my memories, the postcards would have been pictures of people that I remember as preachers because they would come back and they would preach from the pulpit at our church.” (A2)

“At the church that I attend, even amongst the time, the last 10 years or so that I’ve attended it, there’s been a noticeable shift from missionaries being sent out to preach the Word of God, to be a witness to the people, directly and openly; to an almost contextualized, tailor-made, social solution to the people’s problems - whether it be the agriculture in one region, maybe in a more prosperous region it had to do with the legal, in a developing region there was the medical need. But more and more often, regardless of the region, the gospel is being pulled back almost as an apologetic. The missionaries who go there want to bring their services and they feel like they want to bring the gospel as well but when the people ask them, they only directly confront people with the gospel when they’re asked specifically about it. It’s no longer something that they proclaim.” (C1)

Another respondent spoke about technology and how modern day missionaries are not required to immerse themselves in the foreign culture as much as in years past. Two other respondents indicated that they did not have much knowledge of missionary activity in 40-50 years ago. Therefore, they were unable to respond to the question without speculation.

Rephrasing the question and focusing more on social action, the researcher asked each focus group: Would everyone here agree that in your lifetime you have seen a trend in

mission work that moves from less social action towards more social actions? If so, why do you think that that is? Most in the focus groups agreed that during their lifetimes the pendulum has been swinging towards more social action. One respondent said that he really didn't know because of his age and the fact that he has only been in the church for six years. Among those who attempted to answer why they thought the trend has swung more toward social action, at least four of them touched on the idea that western culture and society influences what missionaries are involved in throughout the world. Here are some of their comments:

“We’re a bottom-line kind of society nowadays and social work is so much easier to measure as far as being able to see. People want tangible results. You can bring back a slideshow and show what you built. And it’s hard to measure the growth that’s in individual lives as a result of your work or the gospel going forth. And I think people want to see. We live in a society that...I mean we’re pastors, people are going to want to see results of our ministry. Sometimes it’s difficult to show on a slide. . .” (A3)

“I think that especially Western culture is very materialistic and they’re very materialistic minded and it is a lot of the here and now and I think that there’s an underlying assumption. A part of it could be, that it is a man-centered view of missions— they want people to feel good in this life and that’s what it’s about and that make that the prize goal, so you think you have control over those things. . .” (B5)

“The pendulum shift seems largely to do with a fundamental cultural shift behind the nations that have traditionally been sending missionaries. At least it appears to be that there is less emphasis on the gospel within the local body, the local church itself and not only that but there’s also the local church has been engaged in their culture the sending nature, the nation itself and becoming as the sending nation becomes increasingly hostile to the local church, the local church is either at least we see here in America is slowly becoming relativized or its losing its identity necessarily as a church and becomes more identified with the more abstract idea of just doing good.” (C1)

“I would agree with [C1] in saying that it has a lot to do with the sending nation, just as here in America it has become more seeker-friendly. So depending on what the culture is here is what is used to somehow bring people in, this idea, the syllogism that we like Jesus and we like this thing and if you like this thing, you’ll like us and then you’ll like our Jesus, is the wrong way to approach the desired outcome that you want. That you just transpose to that a different culture, find out what they like or they need, provide that, they’ll like us, then they’ll like our Jesus, is the wrong way to approach that. And

so that pendulum has swung because it started swinging in the sending nation. . .” (C3)

These responses bring up an interesting connection between the gospel of Jesus Christ and western culture. Essentially, they are suggesting that because the gospel has been perceived as more offensive and even scandalous in the west, the church in the west has toned down its message. As the church in the west has toned down its message, missionaries have shifted in their work away from proclamation and towards social action. The reason being, according to these participants, is that social action is less offensive and easier to measure in the West.

The focus of this study is on the practice of missionaries in Malawi. In order to determine the expectations of missionary practices, the topic of priorities was introduced to the focus groups. Each group was asked: **If there is a pendulum in missions that swings back and forth between social action and gospel proclamation (through a teaching/baptism type ministry), what should be the balance between the two? Should there be a priority? If so, how should we determine that?** In each one of the focus groups, all of the respondents felt that proclamation should be the priority over social action. Some comments that reflect that are:

“ . . . who are “they”? Those who are not saved, they need to see the love of Christ. They don’t see the love of Christ. They have no concept of the love of Christ until they have the mind of Christ, which can’t come until the Holy Spirit has enabled them with that mind, producing faith, rejuvenating, completely remaking the person.” (A4)

“ . . . or a guy going to China where missionaries aren’t welcomed. Well, if the guy goes over there just to teach, and he loses perspective as to why he’s doing that, then always concerned about his empty dead works that don’t save. So, with someone who is very new to this mission minded ecclesiology, it seems like the perspective of remembering why I’m here, and never losing that focus seems to be something that helps the balance.” (B2)

“I think I would agree with [C6]. I don’t think the church mandated to provide social services but I think the overflow of a healthy church will be social influence. So if the overseers, the shepherd, they’re submitting themselves to Christ as the authority, the head of the church. Their mandate is to protect the flock to uphold the truth. And

then the overflow of that will trickle out into a social impact, which could manifest itself in various ways.” (C2).

There was one statement made, in response to this question about priorities that reflected restrained holism. One respondent (B2) said that social action can be “a means where [one] can earn the right to share the truth.” Even still, the overall focus of his response was on disciple making that had a priority of proclamation type ministry.

4.10.8 Social Action Toward Those Outside of the Church

One subject that appeared in the focus groups was the topic of social action towards others within a church body as opposed to social action towards others outside of the body of Christ. In fact, one respondent even said:

“... the church’s primary need or function [In relation to social action] is to meet needs within the body so that the world outside the body can see the love the body has one for another. As Christ Himself said, “They will know you by the love you have one for another.” And they will look into the church and see the needs being met and long to be in that. And when they long to be in that, they will then ask questions. The questions, “Why are you serving one another? Why do you meet each other’s needs so much? What is this you are doing?” And that’s the motivation for them to enquire of us as we go out and as we go out we engage them and we do this because and we give them the whole gospel proclamation. At that point the hearts are either captured or they shun it. If they shun it, it’s very clear where the Holy Spirit’s working. I think that’s a weakness in the church in the United States and maybe around the world.” (A4)

In this study, an effort was made to keep the discussion focused on the relationship that missionaries in Malawi have caring for the physical needs of those outside of the church, contrasted with the relationship that missionaries in Malawi have through proclamation. Without discounting the practice of caring for others within the church, the questions were asked: **Many Christians would agree that social action should be practiced among one another within the church. Is there a place for social action to poorer communities outside of the church? Is that a responsibility of the church?** The unanimous answer was, ‘yes, social action toward those outside if the church is a responsibility of the church.’ One respondent commented:

“... I can’t preach to someone who is hungry. If they’re hungry, that’s what’s on their mind. So we meet needs as a way to get to our goal of sharing the word, to preach the word. There’s certainly a balance. Christ met physical needs plenty of times during His ministry on earth. Obviously His goal was always the kingdom of God, but there was a meeting of needs on a daily basis in His ministry . . . there is a need/role, I think, for missionaries to meet physical needs. Because I know when I sit in church with an empty stomach, it’s hard to listen.”
(A3)

Many of the respondents simply nodded their heads to indicate, ‘yes.’ In order to extract more comments, a follow up question was asked: **Is there a passage that anyone here can think of that instructs believers to minister to the physical needs of those outside of the church?** Several passages were mentioned. One passage that was mentioned was “The Good Samaritan” (A2). Acts 2:47 was also mentioned (B3), as well as Matthew 6:2 (B6). Another passage was Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” After the respondent quoted that passage, he added, “And once they’ve seen the good works, and of course, the main goal is to preach the gospel” (A6). Another respondent said that “to love your neighbor” would include those “outside of the body” (B6). One passage that was mentioned by more than one respondent, in the course of the focus groups, was Galatians 6:10. One respondent elaborated on why this passage is related:

“... I think of Galatians 6:10, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially those who are of the household of faith.” [It is] not a specific reference to physical needs but I can also think of some Old Testament...where Israel was encouraged or even commanded, I don’t remember the actual passage, to not close her hand against the foreigner, the sojourner. So I think that might have some relevance. It might be a good principle for the church. But I do see that the in the New Testament in the church there is explicit language by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 to work with your own hands so that you can share with one who has a need so you can walk properly before outsiders. And that is a witness to the outsider. And even in Deuteronomy 15 you have the Lord’s people Israel being commanded by God to have no poor among them. So I think primarily in the church ministering to one another, to the poor in the church, but I also think with some of the principles in the Old Testament, the sojourner, someone among you or at least the community among you there should

be some effort to be generous and to not close your hand against someone who has a need . . .” (C4).

Because Chapter 2 of this dissertation spent much time contrasting Matthew 25 with Matthew 28, it is significant that at least one respondent mentioned Matthew 25. He stated:

“ . . . one of the things that Christ stressed in one of the gospels...I’m trying to think where it is, but He almost said it as a test of our faithfulness because He said, ‘You saw a person naked and you clothed him or you didn’t clothe him or a person who was hungry and you fed him or didn’t feed him’ and that kind of, for lack of a better term, “test” it seemed...that’s what He was concerned about, it wasn’t just the gospel, but that kind of led you to the gospel I guess. But He just didn’t preach gospel in a vacuum in the sense that He didn’t meet the needs of folk and that always kind of inspired me because it was almost like, well if I see somebody like you said in need, hungry and I don’t give them food, how am I even acting like Christ, if I’m not doing that kind of thing or like He also said, visit the sick or visit somebody in jail. Those kinds of outreaching kind of things, I think are social in nature but it demonstrates Christ’s love and that’s...we have to connect those two things.” (A5)

Having established a unanimous consensus among participants that social action is a responsibility of the church, the next question relates to the church supporting missionaries to carry out the responsibility of social action. After all, it is one thing to say that the church should be involved in social action, but it is another thing to say that the church should financially support missionaries to be focused on social action.

4.10.9 Financial Support for Social Action

Previously, the general consensus among focus group members was that gospel proclamation should be primary in church mission work. Yet, members from each group also affirmed that social action is a responsibility of the church. In order to gain further insight regarding the priorities of missionaries, each group was asked: **Do you think that churches today should support a missionary who is spending 90-100 percent of his/her time in social action?** This question not only touches on the issue of financial support, but it also places the tension of priorities into a plausible scenario involving a single individual. This question challenges the perception of

what a missionary should practice in the mind of Christians in the West. Even in the answers of the respondents, some of them had specific situations in their minds, and some of them had specific individuals in mind. Eleven respondents commented on this question and out of the eleven, five said “no.” However, none of the respondents gave an unconditional “yes.” Each respondent who said “yes” gave a lengthy explanation of certain conditions that would be required to maintain their affirmation. This was not the case with those who said “no.” One respondent simply said “I’d say ‘no’” (C6). Other negative responses included:

“... I would say “no” because most of the time if they were spending all this time just doing social action, they usually lose sight of doing the proclamation of the gospel.” (C5).

“No, because that missionary is imbalanced in their view of the connection between social action and gospel proclamation.” (C4)

“... if someone is spending a large majority of time on social action and not gospel proclamation then I would say they aren’t fulfilling the role of a missionary so I think it would be unwise at that point for a church to use funds to support that person.” (B6)

The researcher noticed that when the initial answer was negative, others quickly followed suit with negative responses and the discussion carried on longer as some then brought up scenarios where there might be exceptions. However, in the first discussion group, the first response was a positive response within the context of a certain scenario. After that response, no negative responses were made and there was no interest in a challenge to the scenario. That first response from the first discussion group was:

“I would say, there are times when I could see that happening ... at Grace Church here, they are going to be opening a hospital in West Africa. They’ve been told that the gospel and their ideology is going to be part and parcel of what they do there. But the government there needs the hospital work so badly that they’re willing to accept that. It may be...I can conceive that these doctors who are going, may spend 110% of their time on medical things in the first ... I don’t know what their plan is, but I would be okay with that, knowing that their goal is ultimately for the strengthening of the church in that area. But I think it would have to be on a case by case basis.” (A2)

Noticing that this type of scenario halted any debate in the first focus group, the researcher proposed a similar scenario to the other two focus groups after their negative responses seemed to dominate the discussion. After all, it has been suggested that

. . . in your analytical practice, you can ensure that you make comparisons, and ask questions of your data set, in such a way as to try not only to build up your explanation, but also to seek and try our alternative explanations. The role of negative instances is that you would look for examples, themes, cases, or whatever, which would run counter to the explanation you are developing (Mason, 2003: 197).

In light of this, the researcher said: **Just to push that question a little bit further, with that same question, what if he was in a country like Malawi where there are 14 million people and only 200 doctors and maybe your church has an opportunity to support a surgeon who's going to be doing surgeries for people who are unconscious, and most of his time was dealing with people who are not conscious and not evangelizing, or baptizing or teaching but he's very much involved with social action, do you think that's something that the church should be supporting?** At this point, others joined in the discussion with certain positive responses, though they were not without their conditions. Originally, one respondent had an extremely conditional acceptance prior to the follow-up medical scenario:

“ . . . If the only way that a missionary could get into a closed country was under a visa that allowed them only to do social activity, then by all means. I would say do whatever we can to get into that country as long as that's not the overall goal of that missionary.” (C2)

After the Malawi medical scenario was introduced, the same respondent slightly broadened his position:

“Yeah, I'd have to think through that one. My conscience says “no,” that's not what the church's responsibility is to do. But at the same time, if that's his only access to a people or a place that doesn't have the gospel and he's given limited opportunity to share the gospel and the church wants to support him in that and he's under the umbrella of the local church then I say, ‘maybe.’” (C2)

Other respondents were more open, but still placed somewhat strict conditions on the idea of supporting a missionary who spends the majority of his time on social action. Some of their responses included:

“ . . . if a local church agrees we should provide funds for this person, maybe for 5 or 6 years once they become accustomed and get to know the people, you can have an effective gospel speaking ministry that that may not be a bad option for them to do, and that we would tolerate a 90-100% social interaction from the first couple of years.” (B3)

“ . . . that kind of a person who’s going into the environment; he’s a doctor, he’s working with unconscious patients will have a lot of interaction with a lot of people there, even so, with the families that are involved with these people. I can see even a good solid Christian person, who doesn’t even consider himself a missionary being effective in living out the gospel in that area. He would have a huge impact, I think, on people. And I have a hard time seeing a disconnect there, simply because he’s just going there to be a doctor. He’s not going to be an effective missionary whether he calls himself a missionary or not. His goal should still be to honor and glorify God and to love people around him. If the church understands that that is furthering a ministry, whether they’ve heard the gospel or not it’s furthering their ministry there in that context. I think that that is very much in line with what the New Testament talks about --- sending out people for the sake of Christ. You’re living Christ before people whether you have an evangelistic message to be preached or not. And that always draws people in, and brings people to many questions: well, you don’t do this with us, you don’t do that with us, why do you live this way, why are you so happy, why are you so joyful? I think it can be a very effective thing. It just depends on whether that’s the goal of that missionary. . . ” (B5)

Even with these positive exceptions that some focus group members expressed, they are still limited exceptions. The general consensus from the focus group discussions was that the church should not financially support missionaries to do work that is primarily social, unless very clear limitations are placed on that missionary. For example, the number of years that the missionary focuses on social action should be limited. Or, it was also suggested that the missionary focusing on social action should be a part of a team where other missionaries are focused more on proclamation so that they balance each other out. One respondent raised another concern about supporting missionaries focused on social action. His comment was:

“ . . . The problem that I think we have [is that] there is no paradigm in the New Testament for that type of ministry, none. Every person that was sent out from a local church that’s any way financially supported in the New Testament, it’s always about gospel speaking. So I think that’s the difficulty we have, is saying that we can do this. . .” (B3)

This last comment expresses a concern for restrained holism. If there is no biblical paradigm for social action-type ministry in the mind of the respondent, he is going to see restrained holism as something that is difficult to justify. Regardless of the reasons behind the reluctance for focus group participants to affirm financial support without reservation for revisionist holism or restrained holism, the result was clear. The participants felt that individual Protestant missionaries should not focus their time and effort solely on social action. Furthermore, they felt that churches should not financially support individual missionaries who focused on social action unless under certain or special circumstances. In short, the participants were concerned that revisionist holism could be a danger for the church.

4.10.10 A Concern for Change

Having established that revisionist holism is a concern among most participants and that some aspects of restrained holism is a concern for some of the participants, the question remains, ‘if this is a problem, what should be done to correct it?’ What do the focus group participants see as a solution to a growing movement of social action among missionaries? The following questions were asked of the participants: **If there has been a trend where the pendulum in mission work is swinging more towards social action, is that something that we should be concerned about? How should we approach this issue?**

In response to the first question, all participants that responded confirmed that they did indeed believe that a pendulum swing towards social action in missionary practice is something they should be concerned about. Regarding the second question, some of the respondents sounded almost fatalistic, basically saying that there is practically nothing the church can do today to correct the problem other than pray:

“I don’t think it’s something that we can necessarily address and fix it, at least find a perfect solution for it in a man-centered perspective. I think there’s got to be a lot of prayer for the church at large - for it go back to its roots, and just faithfulness in the church that you’re a part of . . . If life is going the wrong direction, that’s probably a good thing because that’s the way God has said it’s going to go. This church isn’t always going to be faithful. Most of the churches in Revelation at that point, weren’t doing great. And in many ways that’s the same today—there’s not a lot of churches that are doing well. But I just take encouragement from Ephesians 1- Jesus Christ is still head of His church so His work is still going in a sense, in the way that He wants. He’s honoring those who are still faithful to Him and it doesn’t always mean it’s going to be some grand explosion of everyone coming to the Lord, but they understand the work of Christ and the way it’s supposed to be done.” (B5)

“I think we just have to remember the words of Christ. He says, “ The poor you’re always going to have with you. “ So I think we should be concerned that there’s such a rise in social gospel, only if it minimizes the truthfulness of the gospel message as its embodied in the scriptures. There’s nothing wrong, I don’t think, with the emphasis on social action and helping those who are poor, but if that emphasis negates speaking the truth of God’s word then we have a serious problem and I think we need to, if anything, swing the pendulum back the other way because the poor will always be around. You can’t cure poverty.” (B3)

Other respondents offered more practical solutions to the solving the problem of unbalanced social work among missionaries:

“I think clarification of terms would be a great place to start. A lot of people don’t even know what missional means or social justice. I think it would be good for churches to be very clear and define those terms. I think also a good example for us is in Revelation 2, when Jesus Christ has a word for the church in Ephesus and He tells them, “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore, from where you have fallen and repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.” So from that passage, He sets a good example that the church needs to love Christ above all, and not get sidetracked in these of this world and repentance would be a good place to start.” (B3)

“. . . I think it’s clear from this discussion that it starts at the local church, so if the local church is pragmatic, then their programs are going to be pragmatic and that includes their philosophy of missions. So the way to prevent that for us if we’re training to be pastors, the best way that we can prevent that is that we derive what we do as a

church from a biblical philosophy of ministry. And that starts with the fundamental tenants of the church and then the overflow of that would be whatever: children's ministry, missions, all of the peripheral, I guess we'd say "peripheral," missions should be essential to the local church . . . but, anyway, it starts with a biblical philosophy of ministry in the local church and that overflows into our philosophy of evangelism, outreach and missions." (C2)

" . . . the church should not be absent, continue in ministry and supporting – not just the financial side but the spiritual in partnership with the missionary to keep him accountable at the same time so that he's not by himself doing whatever that he thinks is right in the area that most churches is not as familiar with as this person is after all." (C5)

"It's easier for people because of the fear of man to capitulate on the Word of God and truth and I think the pendulum can swing the opposite end where we just think of people's souls and they go home hungry in our churches. And so, how do we find balance, I think by continuing to be rigorous in academics and not capitulate on the Word of God, even though it seems the higher you go in academia, to be respectable, you have to capitulate on the Word of God. So theologians who won't do that, like some of the people who planted this seminary and Westminster and such and then it trickles down from there. I think it trickles down to the churches from there. So I would say that theology is where it starts." (C4)

Ultimately, what the above four respondents agree upon is that the place to begin with is instruction. Church leaders should be instructed about this from a theological perspective in their training institutions. Churches, and especially mission committees, should be taught about biblical priorities for missionaries. Then the churches should be actively involved in discussing this with their missionaries and working together to ensure that a proper balance is achieved in practice.

4.11 Conclusion

The responses from participants in the various focus groups proved to be helpful for this study. They were able to provide much insight into the expectations that Western Christians have in regards to missionary activity and how it relates to traditional prioritism as opposed to a more holistic practice of mission. It was clear from the responses of the participants that they were not only familiar with Matthew 28, but they understood its emphasis to be one of making disciples. Some members even

emphasized the point that teaching and baptism are descriptive words that help bring out the meaning of discipleship. The majority of respondents thought that proclamation type ministry is the primary activity that should be associated with discipleship. In fact, in all three focus groups, the responses unanimously pointed towards proclamation ministry. Traditional prioritism was the most preferred model of mission work.

When a direct question about social action was asked, many of the respondents agreed that social action is indeed a responsibility of the church. However, when the discussion shifted back to that of financially supported missionaries, proclamation still held its place as the expected priority for missionaries. This is in spite of the fact that no clear consensus was reached in any of the focus groups regarding the definition of the term ‘missionary.’ The respondents felt that churches should not financially support individual missionaries who focused on social action unless under certain or special circumstances. In short, the participants were concerned that revisionist holism could be a danger for the church.

The majority of focus group participants believed that in recent years, there has been a decrease in proclamation among missionaries and an increase in social action work. They affirmed that from their perspective, the pendulum has been swinging towards more social action during their lifetimes. Yet they still believed that proclamation should be the priority over social action. The participants were concerned that, from their perspective, proclamation work among missionaries was declining. They felt that the church should work to swing the pendulum back the other direction and that the place to begin was with instruction. Their thought was that if church leaders were instructed better, they could inform church members and the result could be that missionaries would change their primary activities to reflect traditional prioritism rather than either form of holistic mission.

CHAPTER 5: DATA TRIANGULATION AND NORMATIVE REFLECTIONS ON TRADITIONAL PRIORITISM

5.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, the results of both the theological study and empirical studies have been described, discussed, and interpreted. In Chapter 2, traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism were all introduced as different perspectives on missionary practice. Traditional prioritism was presented with its priority of gospel proclamation while the holistic perspectives were introduced with varying degrees of social action. Restrained holism views gospel proclamation and social action as more or less equal partners while revisionist holism states that either social action or gospel proclamation accomplishes the mission of the church, as long as human welfare is achieved. These three perspectives formed the grid in which key passages, such as Matthew 28:18-20 and Matthew 25:31-46, could be examined. The same perspectives also provided lenses through which to examine the quantitative empirical research in chapter 3. The quantitative research involved a survey that was administered to current missionaries in Malawi. Chapter 4 also utilized the lenses of traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism to examine the qualitative empirical research of this study. The qualitative empirical research involved focus groups in the United States that discussed the relationship between gospel proclamation and social action in missionary work. Thus far, most of chapters 2, 3, and 4 have been displaying data that has been gathered as part of a descriptive-empirical task.

In his book, *Practical Theology*, Princeton Professor Richard R. Osmer writes about four key tasks in practical theology. The tasks are described by Osmer:

- The descriptive-empirical task. Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations or contexts.
- The interpretive task. Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.

- The normative task. Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from ‘good practice.’
- The pragmatic task. Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the ‘talk back’ emerging when they are enacted. (Osmer, 2008: 4).

Osmer suggests that these tasks are not merely steps to be taken during a research project, but rather they are points on a spiral that should be revisited repeatedly during the process of research. This brings up a good point, good scholarship repeatedly circles around the key questions and interacts with observations, theories, practices and strategies of action. As Christian Smith notes,

Good sociology is necessarily both interpretive and explanatory. It seeks both meaningful understanding and causal explanation, each necessarily informing the other. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative concerns and methods of observation, . . . interpretation, sampling, measurement, representation, inference, and causal attribution are all essential aspects of the sociological project (2010: 585)

Smith’s comments about sociology are applicable to research in missiology. In this study, the descriptive-empirical task can be summarized by the questions, what is the problem and why is it there?

5.2 The Descriptive-Empirical Task and the Triangulation of Data

Presenting the data from the theological study, quantitative study, and qualitative study has helped to highlight the tension between those who see the practice of mission as primarily gospel proclamation and those who do not. It has also helped to build a case that there is a discrepancy between what Christians and missionaries *say* should be the priority in missionary work and what constitutes the actual *practice* of missionaries in Malawi. The demonstration of that discrepancy is not clearly seen until a presentation of consistent and matching data from all three studies (the theological study, the quantitative study, and the qualitative study). This process of presenting data together from all three studies is called the *triangulation* of data.

In order to demonstrate that there is a discrepancy between what Christians and missionaries say should be the priority in missionary work and what constitutes the actual practice of missionaries in Malawi, the following results from the theological study (Chapter 2), the quantitative empirical study (Chapter 3), and the qualitative empirical study (Chapter 4), will be presented together. These results have already been stated in the corresponding chapters, however, in this section the correlation of these results will be demonstrated.

5.2.1 Matthew 28:18-20 is a Key and Influential Passage for Missionaries

It may be difficult to find a theological book on the purpose and practice of Protestant missionary work that does not mention Matthew 28:18-20. The passage was significantly examined in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis. In Chapter 3, the survey data revealed that 100% of missionaries in Malawi were familiar with the passage and 97% of them said that it was influential in their decision to come to Malawi. It was clear from the responses of the members of the focus groups in Chapter 3 that they were not only familiar with Matthew 28, but they understood its emphasis to be one of making disciples. From the perspective of the qualitative theological study, the quantitative study, and the qualitative research among focus groups, Matthew 28:18-20 is clearly an influential passage for missionaries in Malawi.

5.2.2 Matthew 28:18-20 Supports Traditional Prioritism

In Chapter 2, five commentators were examined and all five of them were in agreement that the passage involves proclamation and that the main emphasis of the passage is not social action. In Chapter 3, it was discovered that those missionaries who are involved in gospel proclamation ministries seem to value the influence of the Great Commission more than those missionaries who are primarily involved in social action because, in general, those involved in gospel proclamation said it was more influential than their counterparts. Also, more than 90% of the missionaries surveyed believe that preaching and teaching of the Bible should be a top priority for missionaries in Malawi. Furthermore, 60%-95% of the missionaries surveyed said that the proclamation ministries should take priority over social action ministries. In

Chapter 4, the focus group participants were unanimous that Matthew 28:18-20 emphasized proclamation. In fact, some members even emphasized the point that teaching and baptism are descriptive words that help bring out the meaning of discipleship. All three studies contributed to the conclusion that Matthew 28:18-20 supports traditional prioritism.

5.2.3 The Majority of Missionaries in Malawi are Primarily Involved in Holistic Ministry

In Chapter 2, two different types of holistic ministry were presented: restrained holism and revisionist holism. While the quantitative study in Chapter 3 was not able to determine if a holistic missionary practiced restrained holism or revisionist holism, the study was able to differentiate between missionaries who practiced traditional prioritism and holism. Traditional missionary activity, such as pastors (7.7%), evangelists (4.9%), and Bible teachers (25.2%) make up the minority of missionaries surveyed in Malawi. The survey data revealed that there were nearly as many missionary school teachers in Malawi (36.9%) than there were pastors, evangelists, and Bible teachers combined (37.8%). This reality stands in contrast to the responses of the focus group members in Chapter 4. In all three focus groups, the respondents unanimously believed that the primary occupation of most missionaries *should* be proclamation ministry.

5.2.4 The Practice of Missionaries in Malawi is Not Consistent with the Ideal

Through the triangulation of data, the problem is illuminated all the more. The clear expectation of those interviewed in the focus groups was that missionaries should be primarily involved in proclamation activity. Missionaries themselves say that proclamation passages like Matthew 28:18-20 have been influential their decision to go to Malawi. They also say that teaching, baptism, and discipleship should be among the top priorities of missionaries. However, in practice, most missionaries in Malawi are not involved primarily in proclamation ministry. The majority of missionaries surveyed in Malawi are involved in activities like teaching school children (36.9%); medical ministry (11.7%); agricultural work (1%); mercy ministry

(3.9%); youth work (2.9%) and support staff (5.8%). 31% of missionaries in Malawi are not discipling anyone in spite of the fact that 99% of the missionaries surveyed indicated that discipleship was either essential or important. More than 25% of missionaries are rarely sharing their faith with those outside of the Christian faith. The ideal, as expressed by missionaries themselves, Western Christians, and the position of traditional prioritism is not being practiced by missionaries in Malawi. This inconsistency is not unique to this study, according to Stan Guthrie,

A 1991 study uncovered a striking divergence of view on such matters between people who work for Christian relief and development agencies and the Christians who support them. By far, the majority of Christians who contribute to those agencies see evangelism as their top priority. However, only 37 percent of agency staffers agree that 'the ultimate goal of economic development projects should be to spread the gospel and convert people to Christian faith' (2000: 129).

More recently, Robert Wuthnow has noted, "A question that has long preoccupied church leaders is whether missionary efforts should go hand in hand with hunger relief and other humanitarian efforts or whether the two should be regarded as competing priorities" (2009: 154). While Wuthnow's research had a slightly different focus, he was able to represent well the objections that many people have when discussing the church's involvement in social action activities such as "peacemaking" involvement in war-torn countries. He writes:

Another objection to peacemaking is that it deviates from leaders' interest in planting or helping to plant churches. Sending a missionary is a direct way to further this cause. Supplying food, shelter, or medical assistance helps the people who belong to new churches or gives local pastors a way to attract people. Peacemaking suggests diverting time and resources from these important activities. 'Our focus is on raising up churches and bringing the message that we have to people,' explains one pastor. Peacemaking connotes something the World Council of Churches might try to do, but it does not resonate with his philosophy of the church or spark a burning desire. His goal is to 'change individual hearts' with the expectation that peace of that kind 'will somehow filter through any violent situation or oppressive environment' (Wuthnow, 2009: 156-157).

Before suggestion solutions on how to effectively bring about positive change to this situation, an important step must not be neglected. The interpretive task of practical theology needs to be considered.

5.3 The Interpretive Task in Practical Theology

The descriptive-empirical task has answered the question, what is the problem? The goal of the interpretive task is to answer the question, why is the problem occurring? Below are seven factors that may contribute to the reasons behind this issue.³³ Each factor gives insight as to *why* two Christians might hold different perspectives about social action and gospel proclamation.

5.3.1 Differing Definitions of the Gospel

The temptation to neglect the gospel or redefine it is not new. In the past, it has been common among ecumenical movements but as holistic mission gains popularity, the temptation to focus on elements that keep the social action side successful tend to overrule the voice that says the gospel should be proclaimed. In his book, *Missions in the Third Millennium*, Stan Guthrie has written,

. . . this emphasis on holism, as good as it is, carries a danger, which has been seen before in the ecumenical movement: the danger that traditional notions of evangelism and church planting will be neglected. One problem is the ever-present temptation to soft-pedal the preaching of the gospel in order to keep development programs and community relationships going. While advocates of holistic mission usually stress that evangelism and acts of compassion must work side by side, in practice this is not always possible (2000: 128).

Besides the temptation to soft-pedal the gospel, terminology is an important issue when describing the gospel of Jesus Christ. One person might describe the gospel narrowly with terms such as *confession of sin, repentance, spiritual regeneration, sanctification, and future glorification*. Another person might have a broader

³³ These factors were presented in a section of a journal article that was recently published by the researcher (Biedebach & James, 2014). While most of the paragraphs have been re-written and expanded by this researcher, the general outline follows the same pattern that was represented in the journal article.

description of the gospel, adding to the above terms *human flourishing*,³⁴ *shalom*, and the *general well-being* to the human race. The conflict comes when others apply the added terms to the fulfillment of gospel proclamation. If a member of the holistic camp says that the gospel has been fulfilled because a sense of *shalom* has been experienced by a certain people group others would disagree, especially if regeneration was not experienced.

Those that advocate traditional prioritism oppose that broader definition of the gospel. D. A. Carson provides an example of such opposition, since the gospel is "the good news of what *God has done*, not a description of what [Christians] ought to do in consequence One cannot too forcefully insist on the distinction between the gospel and its entailments" (2013: 353). Furthermore, to represent the gospel of Jesus Christ as being about the general betterment of unbelieving society is to *misrepresent* the gospel. John MacArthur writes,

Is social reconstruction even an appropriate way for Christians to spend their energies? I recently mentioned to a friend that I was working on a book dealing with sin and our culture's declining moral climate. He immediately said, "Be sure you urge Christians to get actively involved in reclaiming society. The main problem is that Christians haven't acquired enough influence in politics, art, and the entertainment industry to turn things around for good." That, I acknowledge, is a common view held by many Christians. But I'm afraid I don't agree . . . God's purpose in this world—and the church's only legitimate commission—is the proclamation of the message of sin and salvation to individuals, whom God sovereignly redeems and calls out of the world. (1994: 12)

5.3.2 Differing Views on Eschatology

David J. Bosch has said that "there is today widespread agreement that eschatology determines the horizon of all Christian understanding, even if we are still groping for its precise meaning" (1991: 508). His words emphasize both the influence of eschatological views on Christian understanding as well as the diversity of views regarding eschatology itself. Bosh further warns that those who are *fixated* on

³⁴ For an example, see <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2014/01/09/its-not-enough-to-care-about-the-poor>. Accessed 9 January, 2014.

eschatological issues tend to “cripple Christian mission,” while those who *neglect* eschatology tend to lose “Christian hope” which is a motivating element of mission (1991:508). Understanding that eschatology is important in mission, it is prudent to consider how different eschatological views influence different practices in mission.

There are three primary views that theologians often identify themselves by when discussing the end times. These views are amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism. As their titles suggest, they all differ on their view of when the return of Christ in relation to the 1,000 year (millennial) reign of Christ as described in Revelation 20. Those holding to the amillennial perspective, believe that there will be no future millennium – but that the present age is the spiritual millennium. Premillennialists believe that Christ will return before a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. Postmillennialists, on the other hand, believe that Christ’s return will come after a 1,000 year period of peace and prosperity on earth.

Through a proclamation of the gospel in the present age, an unprecedented number of people in the world – in fact, a vast majority – will turn to Christ and be saved . . . the present age gradually merges into the millennium in such a way that it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern the exact starting point of the millennium . . . the millennium will be characterized by spiritual prosperity, universal peace and righteousness, and economic well-being. Although Christ is not physically present on earth during the millennial period, He is believed to be the primary agent and cause of the church’s expansion and influence (Waymeyer, 2004: 3-4).

It has been noted that postmillennialists are extremely concerned about the redemption and reformation of society. This is not to say that non-postmillennialists have no concern about the society around them, but historically, postmillennialists express a greater concern and commonly use terminology such as “redeeming society” and “reforming society.” As one church historian notes about the New School Presbyterians in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s,

New School Presbyterian theology was strongly focused on applying biblical truth to individual lives in order to evoke repentant faith in Christ and spiritual transformation. Because of its postmillennial eschatology, it was also vigorously concerned for the reformation of society and culture (Lovelace, 1979: 141).

Advocates of holistic mission sometimes write and speak using terminology that rings of postmillennialism. They speak about “redeeming the world” in the context of physical redemption more than spiritual redemption (though sometimes those contexts are not differentiated). Tim Keller illustrates this as he writes:

In short, the purpose of redemption is not to help individuals escape the world, it is about the coming of God’s kingdom to renew it. God’s purpose is not only to save individuals, but also to make a new world based on justice, peace, and love, rather than on power, strife, and selfishness. If God is so committed to this that he suffered and died, surely Christians should also seek a society based on God’s peace and love (2005: 2).

Elsewhere, in Keller’s book, *Ministries of Mercy*, he writes:

Christ came to bring the kingdom of God back to earth. The kingdom is *the power of the king*. Thus the kingdom of God is the renewal of the whole world through the entrance of supernatural forces. As things are brought back under Christ’s rule and authority, they are restored to health, beauty, and freedom. The kingdom of God comes in two stages. It will come totally and fully at Christ’s second coming, but it has already come partially through the first coming of Jesus (T. J. Keller, 1989 emphasis his)

Interestingly, even those who would not publicly identify themselves with postmillennialism often agree with or use terms that sound similar to postmillennialism. To be clear, while that does not make them a postmillennialist, it simply demonstrates their agreement with certain postmillennial trends. Even David J. Bosch’s view of the kingdom demonstrates compatibility with postmillennialism. Though Bosch hoped for an “eschatology for mission which is both future-directed and oriented to the here and now” (1991:508), he also said that “The kingdom comes wherever Jesus overcomes the Evil One. This happens (or ought to happen) in the fullest measure in the church. But it also happens in society” (Bosch, 1980:209).

Nearly forty years ago, Loraine Boettner, the famous postmillennialist wrote words that sound similar to the words of Keller and Bosch today.

The redemption of the world is a long, slow process, extending through the centuries, yet surely approaching an appointed goal. We live in a day of advancing victory although there are many apparent setbacks. From the human point of view it often looks as though the forces of evil are about to gain the upper hand. Periods of spiritual advance and prosperity alternate with periods of spiritual decline and depression. But as one age succeeds another there is progress (1977: 125).

Boettner went on to compare the state of slavery, oppression of women and children, the lack of political freedom, poverty, and medical care two thousand years ago. He then compared those historical social issues with modern day advances in those arenas. The progress in social reform and spiritual advancement of the world are proofs for his view of postmillennialism.

As one reads the statements of Keller, Bosch, and Boettner, it becomes apparent that one's understanding of the *Kingdom of God* has an impact on one's application of social action. This correlation, however, doesn't necessarily bring clarity to the confusion about social action's role because views of the Kingdom vary and are not always easy to distinguish. As one theologian has written in his seminal work, *The Kingdom of God*,

Our Gospels are full of sayings and parables about the Kingdom of God. We are told what it is like, how it will be manifested, who will inherit it, on what conditions it will be entered. But when all of this has been learnt, we are still left enquiring, 'What is the Kingdom?' (Scott, 1931: 48).

Lesslie Newbigin has said that "The Kingdom of God is, quite simply, God's reign" (1987: 16). David J. Bosch taught that the Kingdom of God was partially realized in the church now but will be perfectly manifested in the future (1980: 222). Similar to Bosch, John Stott taught that we are living in between the times when the Kingdom had "come" already and a time in the future in which it is "coming" (1992: 377). Al Tizon taught that the Kingdom of God involves the total message of the Bible which "reveals a God who cares about the whole person – physical, psychological, social, and spiritual" (2008: 109). David J. Hesselgrave supports a premillennial dispensationalist view which says the Kingdom of God is "the visible reign of Christ on earth between the time of the second coming of Christ and the Last Judgment"

(2005:327). Hesselgrave gives much attention to Alva J. McClain, whose seminal work on the Kingdom categorized at least eight different views on the Kingdom. McClain, himself espousing the dispensational view that

. . . the Kingdom announced by our Lord and offered to the nation of Israel at His first coming was identical with the Mediatorial Kingdom of Old Testament prophecy, and will be established on earth at the second coming of the King (1968: 275).

In relation to social action, a key distinction in the results of different eschatological views can be made between dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists, especially in reference to Old Testament covenants. Non-dispensationalists typically see more continuity between promises made to Israel in the Old Testament and how they apply to the church today. Dispensationalists, on the other hand, typically see more discontinuity between those Old Testament covenants and the church today. Therefore, an Old Testament passage that speaks of social action might be viewed differently by the two camps. A non-dispensationalist might say that the social action command to Israel applies to the church today because the church is the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan from the Old Testament. So, instructions to Israel about social action apply directly to the church today. Conversely, the dispensationalist would likely see less of a connection between that same Old Testament passage and the church today since the instructions were originally given to Israel and the church is distinct from Israel – the application was primarily for Israel. Though the dispensationalist would affirm that certain principles teach believers of all ages about the character of God, and soteriological aspects are definitely developed from one testament to the other; however, specific instructions about taking care of the poor in Israel would apply specifically to Israel and not to the church. For the dispensationalists, instructions for the church regarding social action would come primarily from the New Testament. John Feinberg's comments on this distinction are worth reading:

The more one stresses redemption history to the exclusion of God's other works in the world, the more one's system becomes a continuity system, for all sides agree that soteriologically the same basic things are happening from one Testament to another. On the other hand, the more one stresses the multi-faceted aspects of God's workings in

history, the more his system becomes a discontinuity system, for God does not always work with and through the same peoples, nor does he have the same social and political program for each group (1988: 85).

Eschatological views are not often on the forefront of people's minds when they are discussing social action issues. But one's view of the end times can and does influence one's practice in social activity. Holism places a greater emphasis on the redemption of society because some advocate the importance of bringing the kingdom now in the form of social advancement. Traditional prioritism says that no amount of money and social reform will change what is essentially a heart problem that only repenting, believing in Jesus Christ, and embracing a biblical worldview can solve.³⁵ Historically, those who are in the premillennial camp tend to be more fervent in their focus on gospel proclamation. In Robert Wuthnow's recent book, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches*, he recounts the transition in America in the late 1800s from national missionary societies to independent mission agencies. Agencies like China Inland Mission, the Student Volunteer Movement, Africa Inland Mission, and Sudan Interior Mission all began in the late 1800s. A number of factors are given for the establishment of these agencies. These include "the possible influence of disillusionment with liberalism in established denominations or with bureaucratic structures in general and the evangelistic fervor resulting from premillennial eschatology" (Wuthnow, 2009: 112). This last factor highlights the connection between premillennialism and traditional prioritism. Premillennialists are more likely to support traditional prioritism because they see evangelism as the best way to truly help others in need. By focusing on social justice, those in the traditional prioritist camp would say that holistic mission might be trying to help Africa in an unhelpful way—or at least not in the *most* helpful way.

5.3.3 Differing Views on Direct Gospel Proclamation

According to current mission trends, two different approaches to proclamation are common. One approach is indirect proclamation and the other approach is direct

³⁵ It is estimated that one trillion dollars of Western aid has been poured into Africa in the last five decades (DeYoung & Gilbert, 2011: 188). Traditional prioritism argues that social advancement is not the primary means to help Africa. Rather, spiritually transformed lives brought to spiritual maturity through the ministry of God's Word will produce disciples that will have a supernatural inclination to reach out to the physical needs of those around them.

proclamation. Oftentimes, because of political limitations or religious persecution, missionaries cannot enter a country openly. For example, it is unlikely that a missionary to an Islamic country would be allowed to enter the country legally if he went in primarily as a pastor, church planter or evangelist. That missionary would need to find an indirect way to enter the country – perhaps as a school teacher or businessman. He would have to participate in traditional missionary activity on the side as much of his time might be focused on another occupation. That approach might be necessary in a country that is not open to foreign Protestant missionaries.

In Malawi, a country that openly welcomes missionaries, an indirect approach to missionary work is not required. However, it seems as though that indirect method is still preferred by some missionaries. Serious questions should be asked as to why missionaries in Malawi prefer an indirect approach. Is it because they felt a sense of urgency to get to the mission field, and therefore, they bypassed the formal Bible training that is traditionally associated with missionary preparation? Is it because they felt that their giftedness was not in preaching or teaching the Bible but in another field, therefore they decided to be sent out as an indirect missionary? Is it because their desire was to be involved more in social action or holistic ministry rather than in traditional prioritism? Is there an idea in the mind of the missionary that a direct approach is not the best approach?

While a clear distinction between indirect and direct gospel ministries can be seen, it should be affirmed that traditional prioritism is not opposed to the idea of believers coming to Africa to express Christian love in a tangible way. For example, Malawi has a population of 15 million people and yet there are fewer than 300 doctors in the whole country (McDonald, 2012: 1).³⁶ No traditional prioritist would want to discourage a Western, Christian doctor from moving to Malawi to minister to the physical needs of others. The concern of traditional prioritism, however, is that the western church might be confusing the sending of medical missionaries (for example) with its greater priority of sending missionaries who focus directly on carrying out the

³⁶ This statistic was found in a BBC News article by Charlotte McDonald. The actual number of doctors estimated to be currently in Malawi is only 265.

Great Commission. According to traditional prioritism, direct gospel ministry must always take both theoretical and actual priority over social relief missions.

5.3.4 Differing Views on Pragmatism

Traditional prioritism says that one of the defining problems of the evangelical church today is "a spiraling loss of confidence in the power of Scripture" (MacArthur, 1993: 23). To be pragmatic is to be more concerned with a practice that seems to work than a theory behind it. When it comes to Christian pragmatism, the concern is often more focused on visible results than with theological truths. A few decades ago, pragmatism in the church manifested itself with the pursuit of entertainment. Christians asked themselves how they might get more people in the church to hear the message. The pragmatists came up with ideas like building bowling alleys in the church basements, putting on Broadway-type musicals in their halls on Friday evenings, and changing their Sunday morning worship time to be more contemporary and appealing to younger people. There is not necessarily anything wrong with bowling, going to a musical, or developing a more contemporary worship style. The theological issue is, what is the motive behind it? Obviously if the motive is to attract more unbelievers to the church by means of entertainment, there are some negative ramifications. And many churches learned that lesson the hard way. When one uses worldly techniques to attract people to the church the result is a church full of worldly people that are often more concerned with the pursuit of more worldliness than they are with genuine repentance and true worship.

Today, many Christians are more alert to the dangers of seeker-friendly entertainment as a means of attracting people to the church. But there is another pragmatism that is infiltrating the church. It is a pragmatism that is more commendable than the old one but carries some of the same dangers. It is the pragmatism of social action. As western society drifts further away from many of the Christian moorings it once associated itself with, Christians are looked down upon with more disdain by the world. Many western Christians, perhaps unintentionally, are looking for something for which society can applaud them. They desire for unbelievers to treat them admirably rather than condescendingly. Social action serves as a bridge for respect

that Christians desire. The scandal of speaking about the cross can be pushed aside, at least temporarily, while Christians talk about the wells they dug in Africa or the child they are sponsoring in Asia. And the world does seem to applaud Christians involved in social action. In fact, some non-Christians seem to develop a much higher toleration even for gospel proclamation if it is associated with social action. In fact, in 2009, a British journalist named Matthew Parris, had recently returned to England from a trip to Malawi. He had grown up in Africa as a young child and he had traveled through Africa by land as a young adult, but after his recent trip to Malawi he wrote an article confessing something to the world. His confession was that, even from the perspective of an atheist, Africans benefit more from Christian missionaries than they do from secular relief work. He wrote:

Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good (Parris, 2009: 1).

These are astonishing statements from someone who claims that he does not believe in God. They demonstrate that social action alongside Christian evangelism is different and can be respected by those outside of the Christian faith. Yet, the author remains an atheist. Even if the missionary activity that Matthew Parris witnessed in Malawi was traditional prioritism, the caution still remains – while applause from those outside the church can be gratifying, its pursuit is pragmatic.

Pragmatism is dangerous in the eyes of the traditional prioritist because: 1) the gospel is moved into second place (or at best, an equal place), and 2) the medium becomes the message. When the gospel message is removed as the priority, the result is often a belief that the gospel message alone is incapable of bringing about genuine change in communities. It is as though some think that the message of salvation that Christ preached is insufficient to transform lives unless it is aided by the church's physical works of mercy. The following description of a social justice church plant in Sandtown (a neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland) is an example of an author who is

trying to promote holistic ministry,³⁷ and at the same time questions that any gospel message could exist without holism:

Without a holistic faith, there is no gospel in Sandtown. Living out the gospel in this context has meant building a collaborative network of church- and community-based institutions that focus on housing, job development, education and health care. In 2001, the full-time staff numbered over eighty . . . Seeking the *shalom* of Sandtown means a concentrated effort to eliminate vacant and substandard housing, a K-8 school that has high standards and an excellent record of achievement, a job placement center that links over one hundred residents a year to employment, and a family health center that serves all residents regardless of the ability to pay . . .

. . . Simply ‘preaching the gospel’ would have failed (Gornik, 2002: 193).

There is no doubt that this church in Sandtown has participated in some tremendous work that has been beneficial for its local community. The question is, does the church really believe that community based institutions were necessary prerequisites for a genuine gospel to be proclaimed? It is unclear what the author meant by “simply ‘preaching the gospel.’” He is likely speaking out against a false spirituality that uses Christian language but is not genuine.³⁸ But the message that is conveyed by Gornik is that traditional prioritism would have failed. Traditional prioritism expects that transformed lives will reach with compassion to those around them. The message conveyed by Gornik, however, is that reaching out to meet the physical needs of the community must precede spiritual transformation, otherwise spiritual transformation will never take place. This is a pragmatic approach not because it is necessarily

³⁷ This book is a Festschrift for the late Harvey Conn, professor of missions at Westminster Theological Seminary from 1972-1998. Conn was the mentor of many of today's social action advocates.

³⁸ This was a theme that Gornik's mentor, Harvie M. Conn, spoke out against when promoting social justice. Conn even has a chapter entitled, “Spirituality as a Barrier to Evangelism” in his book entitled “Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace” (1982: 57). That chapter is an attack not on true spirituality but on “world-centered spirituality.” This researcher agrees that false spirituality is something that fails to achieve true evangelistic progress. However, Gornik's words, “simply ‘preaching the gospel’ would have failed” are somewhat misleading and set up a straw-man argument. Those words promote holistic ministry and demote traditional prioritism with a misrepresentation of traditional prioritism. Just to be clear, traditional prioritism is not for false spirituality. Traditional prioritism is for genuine spirituality that is a result of gospel proclamation and results in changed behavior. The behavior of any genuinely transformed person would gladly participate and promote community development. The difference is that holistic ministry places that community development alongside of gospel as a platform for preaching the gospel while traditional prioritism says that the community development (or good works) are the byproduct of a life transformed by the gospel.

seeking approval from the world, but because it the message of Jesus Christ is confused with the medium (social action).

5.3.5 Differing Hermeneutics

One of the reasons why commentators and missiological authors who emphasize social action conflict with those who see gospel proclamation as primary is that they often have a different approach to biblical interpretation. Although not all those who see social action as equal with gospel proclamation are guilty of a multiple meanings, it is not uncommon. The old hermeneutic of church history which says that each passage has one meaning but many applications is passé for many of those who promote social action as an equal partner in the gospel.

From his perspective, Keith Eitel has described those who hold to the new hermeneutic by writing that,

[Their] leadership is suspect if they claim to know the truth especially if it is deemed biblical since truth is personally derived. Highly individualized theological opinions are each considered valid and real even if they may conflict with the Bible. Saving the world is the purpose that drives the Church. Salvation is holistic; it includes faith but not in a common set of doctrines that smack of traditionalism. Instead it is a journey, a walk, or an existential sojourn (Eitel, 2010: 35-36).

The arguments used to support a social justice approach to missions are often based on this multiple meanings hermeneutic. The results are arguments that are rhetorically moving, and that do not rely on a single interpretation of a given passage. For example, according to Bosch, “The text of the New Testament generates various valid interpretations in different readers . . . Thus the meaning of a text cannot be reduced to a single, univocal sense, to what it ‘originally’ meant” (1991: 23).

Compare the hermeneutic of Bosch with that of Walter Kaiser.

. . . there is only one meaning for every place in Scripture. Otherwise the meaning of Scripture would not only be unclear and uncertain, but

there would be no meaning at all – for anything which does not mean one thing surely means nothing. (Kaiser, 1981: 24)

Kaiser's method of biblical interpretation uses the historical background, grammar, syntax, and other considerations to carefully determine the (one) meaning of each text. In contrast, the method used by many holistic writers is much more relative. Ulrich Luz represents a multiple meanings hermeneutic well when he asks, "Are we theologically justified in interpreting a text contrary to its original sense when the resulting meaning is central to the gospel . . . yes" (2005: 283).

Luz offers three reasons in his commentary on Matthew as to why he believes he is justified in interpreting Matthew 25 contrary to the sense that Matthew intended. His first reason is 'unconditional love.' Luz reasons that since Jesus "spoke unconditional love not simply for strangers but even for enemies (5:43-44)" (2005: 283), then the principle of love supersedes the limits of the individual text. Luz notes that Matthew 28 speaks of taking 'radical love' to the nations and because Jesus' love is so broad, "we take 'the crucified interpreter,' Jesus, as the guiding principle for dealing with this individual text [Matthew 25:31-46]." He further states that "It is possible that today the universal interpretation can break through the limits of love in a way that corresponds to the story of Jesus to which the entire New Testament bears witness" (Luz, 2005: 283-284).

A second reason Luz believes he can interpret Matthew 25 differently than Matthew would have is Matthew himself points in the same direction as the universal interpretation because he "believed that the Christian church has no specific position at the judgment; it will be tested by its Lord, the Son of Man, only on the basis of its deeds of love, the same as anyone else" (Luz, 2005: 284). Therefore, Christians should not see themselves in an 'absolute' manner. Luz suggests that "The modern representatives of the universal interpretation take a big step in the direction of 'deaboslutizing' the church" (2005: 284).

Finally, Luz gives a third reason that involves the criterion for truth. He concludes his supportive arguments by stating:

Fundamental – from the perspective of Jesus – is the question whether a new interpretation of a biblical text produces love. That is the criterion today for the truth of theological new interpretations of biblical traditions. Does the universal interpretation do that? Yes, it does! It makes it possible to discover anew the poor of the world, the non-Christian, indeed, even God in a way that results in the love of which the text speaks (2005: 284).

In response, the traditional prioritist would ask, “If love is the criterion today for truth, who defines what love is?” After all, the biggest expression of love would depend greatly on one’s soteriology. If Matthew 25 speaks of eternal judgment for those who reject the message preached to them by Christ’s disciples (Keener, 2009: 605; Osborne, 2012: 937), then proclamation to the world should be the priority of mission. For according to the classical interpretation, proclamation would be the most loving thing to do for others. On the other hand, if Matthew 25 warns of a separation from Jesus on the basis of not doing good works like social action (Allison, 1997: 428-429; France, 2007: 958), then the most loving thing to do for others and oneself would be to place a strong emphasis on social action. Thus, different principles of hermeneutics produce different practices of mission.

An example of the tension between advocates of the universal interpretation and advocates of the classical interpretation can be seen in the interaction between Tim Keller and Peter Naylor. The latter criticizes Tim Keller's handling of key passages by saying, "He approaches the text with a predetermined agenda that distorts his interpretation" (Naylor, 2013: 162).³⁹ Keith Eitel gives another example of how strong the feelings are in missionary circles between those who differ in hermeneutics:

We live in a time of dangerous creativity in missionary circles. Creative tensions without biblically firm boundaries will result in compromises that undermine the message we have to offer to the world. Unless believers set hermeneutical measures in place that will safeguard the integrity of the gospel message itself, missions will falter (Eitel, 2010: 34).

³⁹ Richard Holst provides another example of the accusations that exist between traditional prioritism and holistic mission. Holst sees Keller's hermeneutics as occasionally defective—especially his habit of overworking metaphors and of sliding into allegory. Holst sees these as the source of many of Keller’s “questionable views” (Holst, 2013: 171).

5.3.6 Differing Views of Jesus' Ministry and Miracles

What about the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles? Some promoters of holistic ministry argue that since Jesus was involved in both proclamation and healing acts of mercy that He sets a pattern for His disciples to follow even today. They believe that Christians today should have dual goals of evangelism and social action because Jesus had those goals and demonstrated social action through His miraculous works.

John Stott has articulated this position well when he wrote about a ministry of both works and word patterned after Christ's ministry. Says Stott:

Nor do I feel able to withdraw the conviction that our mission is to be modeled on Christ's. Just as his love for us is like the Father's love for him, so his sending us into the world is like his Father's sending him into the world. If words and works went together in his ministry, they should also in ours (1992: 342).

In response to Stott, David Doran has written:

... the connection that Stott draws between the works of Jesus Christ and social action is very weak. The Lord's works were miracles—He fed the hungry by turning a few loaves of bread and fish into enough to feed thousands as a display of supernatural power. The leap from that to opening a soup kitchen is woefully simplistic and stretches credibility. To move from miraculous healings to providing medical services is, from my perspective, equally suspect. His miracles were unique and served a sovereign purpose for authenticating His Messiahship (cf. Matt 11:4–5; John 2:11). There can be no doubt that Jesus was moved with compassion by the hurts and needs of people, but it is wrong to conclude that the miracles were primarily a matter of compassion. The Lord of Glory clearly possessed sufficient power to heal everyone, but did not. (2001: 13)

Another writer in *Bibliotheca Sacra* presents a similar view to that of Doran:

In presenting biblical support for their emphasis on social action such evangelicals point to the ministry of Jesus Christ in healing and in feeding the hungry. They fail to point out that Jesus fed the multitudes on only two occasions throughout His ministry and that on the day after the one miraculous feeding He rebuked the crowd for being interested only in a free meal (John 6:27–28). Certainly many other

hungry people lived in Palestine whom Jesus did not feed. His miracle was designed not so much to meet the hunger of the crowd—though it did that—but to witness to Him as God’s Messiah and incarnate Son (Anon., 1983).

Traditional prioritism would say that the purpose statements of Jesus' earthly ministry always focused on proclamation and on His substitutionary death for sinners. Passages they might turn to include:

Mark 1:38 – “Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.”

Mark 10:45 – “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Luke 4:43 – “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.”

The point is that one’s view of Jesus’ miracles and ministry in the New Testament can have a great influence on one’s perspective of holistic ministry. Those who believe that Christ’s miracles are a model of compassion meant to point the church towards social action would be more inclined to support a holistic mission model. Those who believe that Christ’s miracles were for the purpose of confirming his message and Messiahship would be more inclined to support a traditional prioritist model of mission.

5.3.7 Differing Views as to How the Early Church Fulfilled Jesus' Commission(s)

Traditional prioritism would argue that Jesus' various commissions to the disciples leave no room for making social action an equal partner with gospel proclamation, church planting, and theological training. They would say that Jesus' instructions to His followers after His resurrection focused exclusively on making disciples through evangelism and teaching.

Matthew 28:19-20 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you . . . "

Luke 24:46-48 - "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for

forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Realizing that social action is conspicuously absent from the commissions recorded in Matthew and Luke, John Stott draws attention to Jesus' commission to the disciples in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (2008: 30). Stott interprets this statement to mean, "The Father sent Me to evangelize *and* to heal the sick and help the poor; therefore, I am sending you to do both as well" (2008: 30). Many Africans have also drawn a correlation between Jesus' miracles to current missionary practice in Africa. As one African theologian observed,

There is no doubt that Africa is the home of some of the most abject poverty on the planet. Many Africans suffer from the ravages of disease, blindness (both physically and spiritually), and the bondage of injustice, poverty, and oppression. It is for these that Jesus came, not only to give them eternal life, but also to restore them to fullness of life here on earth. For as Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, cast out demons, forgave the sins of the prostitutes, and gave them a new chance in life, so he continues to do the same on the African continent (Mbuvi, 2002: 292).

Traditional prioritism would suggest that Mbuvi's comparison is not as direct it appears in the above quote and that Stott tries too hard to find social action in John 20:21. The Father's authoritative sending of Jesus (the co-eternal, co-equal Son) into the world is a dominant theme in John's gospel (John 3:16-17; 5:24, 30, 36-37; 6:44, 57; 7:28-29; 8:42). In light of this, no complicated explanation of John 20:21 need be sought: as the Father authoritatively sent the Son (and as the Son submissively obeyed), so Jesus now authoritatively sends His disciples (Biedebach & James, 2014).⁴⁰The traditional prioritist would see the main issues in John 20:21 as authority and obedience, not the content of the mission. In fact, they would argue that much of Jesus' mission—such as His substitutionary death—was irreproducible. Additionally, some would point out that Stott's view of John 20:21 fails to give proper regard to the fact that, in the context, forgiveness of sin is the only thing mentioned, not social action (20:23).

⁴⁰ Most of the remaining paragraphs in section 5.3.7 were published in a joint journal article written by the researcher and Joel James (Biedebach & James, 2014: 46-47).

From the perspective of holistic mission, some have suggested that the indirect approach to mission is essential for direct mission to exist. The proclamation of the early church in the book of Acts was so successful, they say, because they cared so much for one another's physical needs as well. Dewi Hughes articulates this viewpoint well,

I have been asked on a number of occasions why it is that in the New Testament the emphasis is almost always on Christians looking after their own poor. The answer is that Jesus is establishing a specific type of society on earth that prefigures the glorious society that will be fully revealed at his second coming. . . . [Regarding the early church in Acts] It was the quality of the communal life of the church that caused the church to enjoy 'the favour of all the people', which in turn provided the platform for sharing the good news of Jesus Messiah (2010: 47-48).

This view, that social is the platform necessary for effective proclamation stands in contrast to traditional prioritism. For it sees social action as pre-evangelism. It also begs the question, did the early church give toward one another's physical needs so freely because they saw it as part of fulfilling Jesus' commission to evangelize, or was it simply a genuine response of love by those who had been converted.

If Jesus' commission in John 20:21 was a veiled encouragement to carry out a dual-track mission in the world (evangelism and social justice), then traditional prioritism might argue that later in the book of Acts, the apostles clearly failed to understand Jesus. In Acts 10:42, Peter summed up his interpretation of Jesus' commissions this way: "He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead." As one untimely born, the apostle Paul received his commission from Christ years later; nonetheless, Jesus' words to Paul on the road to Damascus (and Paul's subsequent obedience) were strikingly familiar:

Acts 26:16-20 – 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly

vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”

The book of Acts reveals that the apostles and the early church fulfilled Jesus' instruction with an astonishing single-mindedness of purpose, preaching the Word of God for the salvation of sinners and the edification of the saints.⁴¹ Traditional prioritism understands Paul and Barnabas' ministry in Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe as involving evangelism for the purpose of starting a church and subsequent leadership training. These were the focus of the early church's missionary labors.⁴²

Acts 14:21-23 – “After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith. . . . When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Traditional prioritism might point out that in the early church, the only church-organized relief projects mentioned in Acts and the Epistles took place *within* the church, including the various financial gifts sent by the Greek churches to the impoverished believers in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30; Rom 15:25-26; Gal 2:10) and widow care (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 5:3-16).⁴³

Regarding the deacons of Acts 6, traditional prioritism says they were ministers to the church, not missionaries to the world. Furthermore, the apostles deliberately avoided becoming personally enmeshed in the demands and distractions of organizing them (e.g., Acts 6:2-4; 1 Cor. 16:2). Their reason is obvious. As one social action advocate

⁴¹ See Acts 2:38; 3:19; 4:31, 33; 5:42; 6:7; 8:4; 10:42-43; 11:19; 12:24; 13:38, 46; 14:21; 17:1-3; 18:9-11; 19:9-10, 20; 28:30-31.

⁴² In their case, Bible translation was unnecessary because, in the Septuagint, the Old Testament was already available to Greek speakers.

⁴³ In reference to 1 Timothy 5, Naylor writes, "The test of a widow's eligibility was strict: she had to be a member of the church, known for her good works and godliness There is no evidence that the church at Ephesus ran a social service for all the widows in the city; in fact, *the text of 1 Timothy 5 shows us that it did not do so*" (Naylor, 2013: 151) (emphasis original).

notes, "In the global urban context, doing justice requires an increasingly complex set of skills within the fields of community development and community organizing" (Gornik, 2002: 193). Social action ministry is not something a pastor or a missionary does on the side for ten minutes a week.

This doesn't mean that the early Christians showed no concern for the needy outside the church. Far from it. For example, personal ministry to widows outside the church apparently did take place.⁴⁴ There can be no doubt that believers in the book of Acts met "pressing needs" (Titus 3:14) by caring for the orphans, widows, and poor who were part of their lives, thus fulfilling Paul's instruction: "While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal 6:10). Traditional prioritists would say that loving the hurting people in ones' proximity is a normal part of daily Christian living, an expected fruit of gospel proclamation.⁴⁵ However, they might add that there is no evidence that the apostles tried to make social relief the face of the church or that social action projects were part of their Great Commission strategy.

5.3.8 Summary

The interpretive task in practical theology asks *why*. The above examples present a number of reasons that could explain why the practices of holistic mission differ from those of traditional prioritism. It is important to emphasize the fact that not all advocates of holistic ministry will differ with traditional prioritists on all eight views above. On the contrary, it is more likely that an advocate of holistic ministry may only differ with a traditional prioritist on a few of the views above. Yet, the advocates of both holism and prioritism are from such diverse backgrounds that there is a spectrum of differences to choose from. Among them are differences on the

⁴⁴ This is based on the distinction that Luke makes between "saints" and the "widows" in Acts 9:41. F. F. Bruce considers it unlikely that Luke meant that the widows were not Christians (F.F. Bruce, 1952: 213). Many traditional prioritists would acknowledge that the view is possible.

⁴⁵ People in congregations that are examples of traditional prioritism are often employed at orphanages, teach Bible studies for orphans, volunteer at hospices, run schools instructing underprivileged African farmers, minister in prisons, sponsor theological training for needy pastors, and a host of other mercy efforts. They do these things because they are Christians, fulfilling Galatians 6:10, not because the church corporate is called to organize and run social action programs.

definition of the gospel; different views on eschatology; different views on whether gospel proclamation should be direct or indirect; or different views on the pragmatism that is typical in churches today. They may practice a different hermeneutic. They may hold to different interpretations relating to the significance of Jesus' ministry and miracles. They may also differ as to their understanding of how the early church fulfilled Jesus' commissions. There may be other areas that are root causes behind why the practices of missionaries may vary. However, the differing views mentioned in this section provide a sufficient explanation for why some missionaries practice holistic mission work while others practice traditional prioritism. It may even be possible for a missionary to say that he holds all of the traditional prioritist viewpoints, yet he has been so influenced by popular holistic practice that he unwittingly practices holism in a manner that is contrary to his own theological viewpoints.

5.4 The Normative Task in Practical Theology

The normative task in practical theology answers the question, *what should the situation look like?* Kevin Gary Smith calls this task "the preferred scenario" and says, "the goal of this stage is to formulate a theological model for the preferred scenario, interpreting the world as it should be" (2008: 208). In this study, the researcher will present the normative task from the perspective of traditional prioritism. Since the empirical research revealed that the primary tension is between the belief that gospel proclamation should take top priority in mission work but the reality is that social action dominates mission work in Malawi, forming a theological model for traditional prioritism will help to define a normative perspective. In order to construct a theological framework and interpret what is actually being practiced in Malawi from a normative perspective, it is important to investigate both biblical themes of traditional prioritism as well as notable Christian examples of traditional prioritism in Africa.

5.4.1 A Modern Day Normative Example of Traditional Prioritism in South Africa

Though the missionary trend in many African countries is away from traditional prioritism and towards holistic mission, certain examples of traditional prioritism do exist. One such example is the current missionary movement out of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California to the Republic of South Africa. In less than 25 years, this astonishing movement has established churches and sparked a movement of expository preaching in South Africa that involves hundreds of pastors. A secondary result from this movement that focuses on gospel proclamation is that numerous social works have been started.

This movement began when the Pastor of Grace Community Church in Los Angeles, Dr. John MacArthur, visited South Africa in 1992 and preached in a number of different locations. Shortly after that visit, two churches formed and began to call pastors who had been trained in biblical exposition by Dr. MacArthur and the professors at The Master's Seminary, which meets on the campus of Grace Community Church. One of these new churches was in Pretoria. Their website gives this account:

In 1992, Dr. John MacArthur of Grace Community Church, Los Angeles, toured South Africa, preaching in a number of different cities. At that time, various people approached Dr. MacArthur and expressed interest in starting Bible-teaching churches in their own communities. In 1993, Grace Church sent a church-planter to assist these people. With his help, Grace Fellowship Pretoria began holding services in September 1993, with seven people attending the first service. By July 1994, Grace Fellowship had grown to an attendance of about twenty-five. At that time, the church called Joel James, a graduate of The Master's Seminary and intern at Grace Community Church, to be their pastor-teacher. Joel assumed the preaching and shepherding duties of Grace Fellowship in February 1995. The past decade has seen Grace Fellowship's attendance grow to about 200 on Sunday mornings (Grace-Fellowship, 2014a).

Pastor Joel James' entire ministry has been focused on proclamation of the Word of God. His pattern has been preaching and teaching several times a week within a local church context, often preaching by consecutive exposition through various books of

the Old and New Testament. He completed his doctorate in 2008 and his dissertation focused on the process of studying and preparing expository sermons. Since 1994, when Pastor James began pastoring in Pretoria, several South African men who have sat under his preaching have been inspired to earn master's degrees at The Master's Seminary in California with the goal of returning to South Africa and focus on proclamation ministries. These men include Clint Archer, Andrew Zekveld, Andre Pienaar, Ryan Mitchell. Clint Archer is now the pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church. Andrew Zekveld serves as an associate pastor at Grace Fellowship in Pretoria. Andre Pienaar has helped to plant a church in Port Elizabeth. Ryan Mitchell, who recently graduated from The Master's Seminary, is currently serving as the registrar for Mokonyo Theological Seminary near Pretoria.

In 1996, two South African's trained at The Master's Seminary returned to their homeland to be involved in proclamation ministry. Andre Ferreira is currently pastoring Grace Church in Jeffrey's Bay. Dawie Hyman returned to Johannesburg where he became the first pastor of Grace Christian Church in Primrose. This researcher later replaced Pastor Hyman as a missionary sent from Grace Community Church in Los Angeles in 1999. He served as the pastor of Grace Christian Church for eight years, until 2007. During that time, the church experienced numerical growth as well as spiritual growth. Like Grace Fellowship in Pretoria, several young men who sat under the preaching and teaching ministry at Grace Christian Church in Primrose desired to get training at The Master's Seminary in California. Viril Tait, Lonngren Taljaard, and Neil Anderson all earned Master of Divinity degrees at The Maser's Seminary and then returned to South Africa. Since 2007, Viril Tait has served as the Pastor at Grace Christian Church in Primrose. Lonngren Taljaard is currently serving as an associate pastor at Mountain View Baptist Church. Neil Anderson is the Pastor of Grace Bible Church in Port Elizabeth.

In 1997, a few missionaries from Grace Community Church in Los Angeles were invited to help establish a pastoral training program in Polokwane, South Africa. The missionaries helped to establish the seminary and most of them helped to train up others to replace them. One missionary from Grace Community Church in Los Angeles remains, David Beakley. Christ Seminary is now an accredited institution

and they currently offer a bachelor's degree and a diploma in theology. Their mission statement says, "We strive to exalt Christ and strengthen His Church in Africa through training up skilful shepherds who are able to study, live out and communicate God's Word" (Christ-Seminary, 2014b). This is a training institute dedicated to training pastors in expository preaching. The idea behind it is that it will help equip Africans in proclamation ministry so that fewer foreign missionaries will be needed. They ask the following question and provide the corresponding answer on their website:

How does one fill a continent as large as Africa with missionaries who are able to speak the language of the people, who can adapt to the lifestyle, who understand the culture and who know the terrain? We believe the best answer is to fill the pulpits that are already there with Godly indigenous Shepherds who can explain and apply the Word of God accurately. For this purpose we started Christ Seminary in 1997 (Christ-Seminary, 2014a).

Notice the focus on proclamation ministry: "fill the pulpits . . . explain and apply the Word. . ." Since its inception, Christ Seminary has produced over 70 graduates that are filling pulpits in 11 different African countries.

Other missionaries from Grace Community Church are in various parts of South Africa and are also involved in teaching, preaching, and training ministries. Mark Christopher is a church planter and pastoral trainer in Cape Town. Joshua Mack is a church planter in central Pretoria. His father, Wayne Mack, is a former professor at The Master's Seminary who moved to South Africa in 2006 and has been training Christian leaders in biblical counseling since that time.

Today, there are more than twenty Master's Seminary graduates serving in various preaching and teaching ministries throughout South Africa. Dr. Tim Cantrell is the senior pastor of Antioch Bible Church in Randburg. Matt Viljoen is the pastor of an Afrikaans congregation in Midrand. Wynand Fourie is the senior pastor of Jeffrey's Bay Bible Church. Chris Woolley is the Senior Pastor of Midrand Chapel. Bruce Newsham is a missionary based in Pinehurst. Their ministries are all representative of traditional prioritism.

Grace Fellowship Church in Pretoria is a flagship church, leading the way for others. “Grace Fellowship aims at being a church that honors Christ through the exposition of Holy Scripture, corporate worship, the fellowship of the saints, and the reaching of the world through the proclamation of the Word of God” (Grace-Fellowship, 2014b). In 1996, Grace Fellowship began a conference for pastors and church leaders. The conference focuses on expository preaching and other pastoral issues.

The vision of the South African Shepherds' Conference is to bring top-quality Bible teachers to give extensive instruction on Bible interpretation, church leadership, philosophy of ministry, biblical counseling, expository preaching, current theological issues, youth ministry, and a host of other important topics (Grace-Fellowship, 2014b).

These annual Shepherds' Conferences now average more than 400 attendees from churches all over South Africa.

In 2008, Grace Fellowship in Pretoria opened a modular training school that offers programs in both expository preaching and biblical counseling. Their expository preaching course is

. . . an intensive, two-week course on the preparation and delivery of expository sermons. It is patterned after The Master's Seminary's Doctorate of Ministry course in expository preaching. This course will challenge preachers to expose the clear meaning of the text of Scripture and communicate it to their congregations in a clear, concise and compelling manner (GSM, 2014a).

Their biblical counseling course is described as [a] five-week modular course on the essentials of biblical counseling for all who want to learn more about how believers ought to counsel one another from the Scriptures (GSM, 2014b). Various pastors and others have attended these training programs and written endorsements that are published on Grace School of Ministry's website. One such endorsement is from Roland Eskinazi, the pastor of Goodwill Baptist Church in Cape Town. He writes:

As a pastor who has been in pastoral ministry for 18 years, I heartily commend the Grace School of Ministry Biblical Counseling course. I have used Wayne Mack's book, *Strengthening Your Marriage* for

many years. Knowing his love for Scripture and excellent application, I did not hesitate to sign up for the course when he arrived in SA. . . . [This course] has personally challenged areas in my own life and marriage, grounded me more in the Scripture and demonstrated how relevant and practical the Bible is in providing solutions for every problem in a Christian's life. It has given me more confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture and can be implemented in both the preaching and counseling dimensions of a pastor's ministry. I heartily endorse it and encourage anyone involved in seeking to help people biblically, to enroll. Both you and your church will be blessed through it! (GSM, 2014b).

A word which can describe the missionary movement from Grace Community Church in Los Angeles to South Africa is 'contagious.' From a pastor who came to visit and preach, to a handful of missionaries in the mid-to-late 1990s to a thriving movement of proclamation. Master's Seminary graduates are filling pulpits, planting churches, training pastors, hosting conferences, and at the forefront of their ministry is proclamation.

This is not to say that social action work is not taking place. A result of these proclamation ministries has been that many members of their congregations have been reaching out to various needs in South Africa. When this researcher was serving as the pastor of the church in Primrose, many of the church members were involved with a group of homes for abandoned HIV-positive babies. Lambano Sanctuary is the name of the ministry that oversaw four homes for children as well as a hospice. In the early days of Lambano Sanctuary, there were two requirements for babies or children to be accepted into one of the homes, 1) they needed to be abandoned by their parents and 2) they needed to be HIV positive. An amazing result in these homes was that once the babies or children were put on the proper anti-retroviral drugs, many of them lost their HIV status. In fact, over 70% of the children accepted into the Lambano Sanctuary later tested negative for the HIV virus. Those that tested negative were put up for adoption and went out to families in South Africa and other countries. Some of the babies that came to Lambano Sanctuary died, and those that remained HIV-positive were given the title, "Forever Lambano Children." The commitment of Lambano Sanctuary was to house the "forever" children until they were adults and healthy enough to move out or until they died. Once the four homes reached their capacity, no new babies or children would be accepted. According to the Lambano

Sanctuary website, their four homes are full with “Forever Children” and they currently have 28 children, ages 8-18 (Lambano, 2014).

This is not the only HIV-positive work that has been associated with Grace Community Church missionaries in South Africa. Joshua Mack, the Pastor of Living Hope Church in Pretoria, also has an association with a home for abandoned babies. Their church’s website says, “At Living Hope Church we are very passionate about the hurting and abandoned. We seek to show the love of Christ to those in need and so we have partnered with IHope Ministries International in starting and supporting the Mumphamuzi Baby Home” (Living-Hope, 2014).

It is important to recognize that, while Grace Community Church missionaries in South Africa are not focused on social action, many *holistic*-type works flow out of their churches. People in their congregations are not only involved with orphans. They serve in a school instructing underprivileged African farmers; they minister in prisons, sponsor theological training for needy pastors, have created a food-for-trash program for street children, and a host of other mercy efforts. They do these things because they are Christians, fulfilling Galatians 6:10, not because the church corporate is called to organize and run social action programs. This is the normative scenario for traditional prioritism. Furthermore, it is a reproducible model for countries like Malawi. It can begin with just a few pastors working together with a commitment to traditional prioritism.

5.5. Interpretive and Normative Task Conclusions

Many reasons can be given to explain why the practice of missionaries in Malawi has drifted from traditional prioritism toward a more holistic approach. This researcher has suggested that different views on the definition of the gospel, different views on eschatology, different views on direct and indirect ministry models, different views on pragmatism, different hermeneutics, different views on Jesus’ ministry and miracles, and different views on how the early church fulfilled Christ’s commissions are all contributing factors as to why some missionaries are focused on holistic mission work as opposed to traditional prioritism.

A normative model of traditional prioritism has been presented from an example of traditional prioritism in South Africa. The model of traditional prioritism in South Africa can be reproduced in other African countries, including Malawi. A strong emphasis on church planting and church strengthening can pave the way for a model of mission that may not have the “photo-friendly” appearance of many holistic mission models, but the results are reproducible, sustainable, and long-lasting.

CHAPTER 6: PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

6.1 Introduction

In the book *Constants in Context* by Stephen Bevens and Roger Schroeder, Bevens (2004:34-35) uses three theological paradigms to evaluate certain constants in mission (such as eschatology, the nature of salvation, and anthropology).⁴⁶ These three paradigms have been referred to in the past as 1) Type “A” or Orthodox/Conservative, 2) Type “B” or Liberal, and 3) Type “C” or radical/liberation theology.⁴⁷ In chapter 5 of this dissertation, the interpreted problem was identified as a trend that pulls missionaries away from traditional prioritism. Admittedly this “problem” is more of a concern for orthodox/conservative theologians than it is for liberal theologians. Likewise, radical/liberation theologians may not see this issue as a “problem” at all.

It is clear that proposed solutions to this issue will vary depending upon the theology of mission that one might hold. Therefore, this researcher intends address these three theological paradigms as he considers solutions for the seven differing views from chapter 5 (section 5.3) of this dissertation (differing definitions of the gospel, differing views of eschatology, differing views on direct proclamation, differing views on pragmatism, differing hermeneutics, differing views of Jesus’ ministry and miracles, and differing views as to how the early church fulfilled Jesus’ commissions). For the purpose of this paper, the researcher will not use Bevens’s terms “Type ‘A,’” “Type ‘B,’” and “Type ‘C.’” Rather, the abbreviated terms “conservative theology,” “liberal theology,” and “radical theology” will be used. Also, this researcher has decided to view these three theologies in the reverse order that Bevens chose to list them because the tension between traditional prioritism and holistic ministry seems to be a greater

⁴⁶ Klippies Kritzinger notes that the structure of Bevens and Schroeder that is used early on in their book (chapters 3-9) is somewhat neglected in chapters 10-12. Kritzinger especially notes this neglected structure in chapter 12 which discusses evangelism saying, “It is a pity that the authors did not follow this structure in chapter 12, in order to sketch the *context* of Christian churches in the 21st century, and the primary agents (“models”) of mission in this period” (2011: 48).

⁴⁷ Bevens mentions Dorothee Solle who used the terms “orthodox/conservative,” “liberal,” and “radical/liberation theology” in her 1990 book *Thinking about God*. He also mentions Justo L. Gonzalez using the corresponding terms “Type ‘A,’” “Type ‘B,’” and “Type ‘C’” in his book *Christian Thought Revisited*.

concern among conservative theologians than it is among radical theologians. Thus, more attention can be given to proposed solutions for conservative theologians since they are considered last.

6.2 Proposed Solutions for Radical Theologians

Radical theology, as described by Bevans (2004: 62) sees “humanity’s nature as both radically sinful and yet fundamentally good.” He goes on to say that “It has some of its most important expressions . . . in the documents of the Second Vatican Council . . . and in the explosion of liberation theology in its Latin American, Asian, black and feminist varieties.” To a certain degree, radical theology is outside of the scope of this research project. This is why, in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, it was stated that liberation theology is not a dominant position relating to social action and gospel proclamation among evangelicals (Section 2.1). Radical theology (or liberation theology) is more common among Roman Catholics than it is among Protestants. This is why David Hesselgrave was quoted (in footnote 4) as saying, “although liberation theology has been espoused by a few evangelicals in the past, it has hardly any evangelical advocates today” (2005:123). The bottom line is that the majority of radical theologians are not concerned that a drift among Protestant missionaries from traditional prioritism toward holistic mission is a problem.

Regarding the differing definitions of the gospel, with radical theology “the concern is not so much whether Christ is the unique savior, but what *kind* of salvation is offered” (Bevans, 2004: 65, emphasis his). Whereas conservative theology is concerned about sin, radical theology is concerned about any enslaving condition, especially issues like overcoming colonialism and western influence. As Millard J. Erickson has stated,

A first step in understanding the position of liberation theology is to note its rejection of the privatization of sin. In the traditional understanding, sin is often seen as a matter of the individual’s broken relationship with God; thus sin is basically unbelief, rebellion or something of that type. Liberation theology, however, is much more concerned about the social and economic dimension of sin (1985: 591).

Therefore, the concern of radical theology is focused more on economic, political, and social injustice. The concern is not focused on proclamation of spiritual salvation from sin.

Regarding eschatology, radical theology has an eschatological focus that is much broader than conservative theology. “Its focus, while not denying realities like heaven, hell, and purgatory, is much more that of general and cosmic eschatological concerns”⁴⁸ (Bevans, 2004: 67). The premillennial vs. postmillennial debate is hardly on the radar of radical theology. Thus, solutions to the differing views on eschatology from Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.2) are limited.

The same could be said for the differing views on proclamation, pragmatism, hermeneutics, and views of Jesus’ ministry and commissions. The agenda of radical theology simply does not emphasize the tension between traditional prioritism and holistic ministry.⁴⁹ In short, because radical theology does not view the drift from traditional prioritism toward holistic mission as a problem, there is no need to propose a solution for this camp.

6.3 Proposed Solutions for Liberal Theologians

⁴⁸ It should be noted that the mere mention of “purgatory” as “reality” that cannot be denied in the same way that realities like heaven and hell cannot be denied is an indication that radical theology is miles away from conservative theology and issues that would surround conservative theology. While radical theologians mention purgatory with such veracity, conservative theologians would question basic concepts that radical theologians consider to be beyond debate. Likewise, radical theologians do not have the same interest in many eschatological issues that conservatives debate.

⁴⁹ A unique adaptation of radical theology has been proposed by Johannes Aagaard who proposes that a key to mobilization and truth is to maintain the tension between radical theology and conservative theology. Rather than choosing one side, Aagaard suggests “Christian anthropology is not an alternative to ecclesiology, neither can the Utopian perspective be separated from the factual, nor the critical from the dogmatic; and to separate the social dimension from the personal is exactly what should by all means not happen” (1977: 30). Somehow, Aagaard suggests that holding to both extremes (radical theology and conservative theology) will bring about the best results for the church and the world. Says Aagaard, “I am not saying this in order to maintain that truth is the middle way. Truth is never in the middle, for in the middle is, normally, just emptiness. Truth is at both extremes at the same time, and its realization depends on extremism. Without tension, no operation” (1977:31). How truth can be found at both extremes is not clear. What is clear is that while Aagaard’s idea of ideas about the importance of tension may be appealing to some radical theologians, it is unlikely to attract the support of many conservative theologians. Thus, it remains a minority position among radical theologians and perhaps some liberal theologians. The majority of radical theologians, however, would not be concerned about a drift away from traditional prioritism.

A key element of liberal theology is human experience. Traditionally, liberal theologians use human experience and philosophical reason to “present Christianity in terms that are compatible with their contemporary mentality” (Bevans, 2004: 51). In other words, liberal theologians typically deal with issues that seem to conflict with Scripture by considering experience and current philosophical reasoning as a means to interpret the Bible. For example, in the United States, during the late 1800s and early 1900s, Protestantism faced the challenge that many people in the church were starting to accept Darwin’s theory of evolution. Many Protestants during that time found it difficult to reconcile scientific theories, like Darwinism, with Scripture. Liberal theology provided an outlet that would allow the acceptance of Darwinism and the Bible, for the Bible could be interpreted in light of modern science. As Justo L. Gonzalez has written,

Protestant Liberalism was an attempt to couch Christianity in the mold of those [evolutionistic] ideas, and gained wide acceptance among the intellectual elite in the United States. . . . the very idea of ‘liberalism’ implied freedom to think as one saw fit – as long as one did not fall into what liberals called ‘superstition.’ . . . most liberals were committed Christians whose very commitment drove them to respond to the intellectual challenges of their time, in the hope of making the faith credible for modern people (1985: 256).

As might be expected, the growth of liberalism in the United States brought no small amount of resistance from conservatives. The famous Princeton professor, J. Gresham Machen was one of the most outspoken conservative theologians against liberalism. In his work, *Christianity and Liberalism* (which was first published in 1923 and is still in print), he said that “Two lines of criticism, then, are possible with respect to the liberal attempt at reconciling science and Christianity. Modern liberalism may be criticized (1) on the ground that it is un-Christian and (2) on the ground that it is unscientific” (2009: 6). Seven decades later, Wayne Grudem describes classical liberal Protestantism as “humanistic, and its approaches are *primarily man-centered* rather than God-centered” (1994: 875, emphasis his).

The kind of rhetoric displayed by both Machen and Grudem highlight the difficulties experienced in dialogue between conservatives and liberals. One of the main problems is that they use two different methods of hermeneutics. Liberal theologians

use philosophical reason “as a basic hermeneutical tool to understand the meaning of Scripture and the nature of Christianity” (Bevans, 2004:51). Conservatives reject philosophical reason as a hermeneutical tool to understand Scripture. The end result is that they disagree not only on the meaning of Scripture but also on the rules one can apply to discover the meaning of Scripture.

While both liberal theology and radical theology would reject traditional prioritism, radical theology differs because it shows no interest in a holistic mission maintain a balance between gospel proclamation and social action. In fact, radical theology would prefer the priority of social action over gospel proclamation, especially if *the gospel* in gospel proclamation was defined solely as spiritual deliverance. Historically, however, liberal theology was different. Prior to the late 1800s and early 1900s, liberal theologians, were more concerned about gospel proclamation than many of them are today. For, as Bevans points out, 19th century liberal theology was “like” conservative theology in its understanding of salvation in that they both “focused on the salvation of the soul” (2004: 58).

As liberalism gained popularity in the late 1800s and onward, there was a shift in the liberal understanding of salvation. Bevans notes,

Rather than understanding sin as something that divided humanity from God, this ‘liberal’ approach conceived sin as that which divides humans among themselves. Salvation, then, was that which brought humans together, improved their lot and set them on the road to cultural and material progress (2004: 58-59).

The result of this shift was that liberals transitioned from having a view of salvation that was more in common with conservatives to one that has more in common with radical theology. “Today [liberal] theology has a much more balanced notion of salvation that in many ways dovetails with [radical theology]” (Bevans, 2004: 59). As might be expected, when the redefinition of the gospel was taking place among liberals from one that focused on the soul to one that looked toward cultural and material progress, the shift away from gospel proclamation toward social action also took place among liberals. Describing the liberals who shifted, Bosch has written,

Their emphasis was on a permeative rather than a narrowly conversionist form of Christian influence. The shift from the primacy of evangelism to the primacy of social involvement was a gradual one and developed a clear profile only by the 1890s (1991: 322-323).

Because liberal theology today is closer to radical theology, the issues of this study are also less of a concern among liberal theologians. Some liberal theologians that hold to more of a historical (pre 1890s) liberal theology would feel the tension more than those who represent modern liberal theology. However, the majority of liberal theologians today do not see a drift away from gospel proclamation towards social action because modern liberalism has redefined the gospel as social action.

In a recent study among both conservative and liberal churches in the United States, it was confirmed that “a defining feature of theological liberalism was embracing social justice” (Todd and Allen, 2011: 232). This study which surveyed more than five thousand individuals from sixty-congregations, representing eleven denominations noted findings which

do not indicate that conservative individuals or congregations are anti-justice or are not engaged in activities they see as making the world a better place, but the findings do reflect differences in how social justice is articulated and enacted between liberal and conservative individuals and settings (Todd and Allen, 2011: 232-233).

In short, Todd and Allen’s study confirmed that “theological liberals prioritize social justice as part of the mission and function of the congregation” (2011: 233). That confirmation along with liberalism’s redefinition of the gospel affects other key issues that explain the tension between gospel proclamation and social action. Differing views of eschatology, differing views on direct proclamation, differing views on pragmatism, differing views of Jesus’ ministry and miracles, and differing views as to how the early church fulfilled Jesus’ commissions are all *different* between liberals and conservatives.

What is the solution to these *different* views becoming the same? It is locked up in the maze of hermeneutics. If liberals and conservatives cannot agree upon common rules of biblical interpretation, then they will never find the same meaning from

Scripture. Chapter 5 proposed reasons *why* traditional prioritism is losing ground to social activism in mission. Solutions to those issues cannot be discovered in radical theology, nor in liberal theology. In fact, those two groups have already made the shift away from traditional prioritism. In reality, the danger of shifting away from traditional prioritism is a problem that exists almost exclusively among conservative theologians. In fact, it should be noted that some liberal theologians (and liberation theologians) see traditional prioritism itself as a danger to mission.

Traditional prioritism is sometimes seen as missing the point of the biblical narrative as a whole. Some accuse traditional prioritists of choosing key texts to support the priority of proclamation while neglecting the overall mission of God. For example, Christopher J.H. Wright sees the grand narrative of all of Scripture as a story about God whose mission is to battle against injustice. Wright says, “Where else does the passion for justice and liberation that breathes in these various theologies come from If not from the biblical revelation of the God who battles with injustice, oppression and bondage throughout history?” (2006:44). He then proceeds to survey both the Old and New Testaments highlighting these characteristics of God. Essentially, Wright fleshes out the skeleton that John Stott introduced.⁵⁰ This skeleton is fleshed out with the *mission of God*, also known as *missio Dei*.

Missio Dei is a relatively new approach to mission understanding that is much broader than the understanding of mission from previous generations. Darrell L. Guder affirms this,

The ecclesiocentric understanding of mission has been replaced during this century by a profoundly theocentric reconceptualization of Christian mission. We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation (1998, 4).

Thus, many liberal theologians have adopted this new perspective as their own and therefore are sometimes critical of conservative theology that does not recognize the *missio Dei* in the same way that the liberals do. In spite of the newness of this

⁵⁰ For more background behind Stott’s introduction, please refer back to Chapter 2 of this dissertation, pages 43-46.

perspective, many outside the conservative camp see *missio Dei* so clearly that it is referred to nowadays as a “classic” perspective. As David J. Bosch has noted, “The classic doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, [is] expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world” (1991:390). Ultimately, it will be difficult for liberal theologians and conservative theologians to be in agreement on the solutions for the problems of traditional prioritism unless they can first agree on the mission of God.

6.4 Proposed Solutions for Conservative Theologians

The tension between traditional prioritist mission and holistic mission (restrained and revisionist) is causing its greatest division among conservative theologians. Some conservatives (on the far right) are fearful that some of their fellow members are slipping into the liberal camp; others on the left of the conservative movement are attempting to justify their response to a legitimate concern for the physical needs of others. It is within conservative theology that solutions can best be addressed regarding the differing views of the gospel, eschatology, direct proclamation, pragmatism, hermeneutics, Jesus’ ministry, and Jesus’ commissions.

Conservative theology should be able to reconcile these differing views because conservative theologians today still hold to the dominant beliefs that they have for centuries. According to Bevans, conservative theology has roots dating back to Tertullian.

In Tertullian’s writings, God is described as a lawgiver and judge, creation is conceived as wholly complete and ordered, and sin is described as going against this order and breaking divine law. Human beings are born into this world as sinners, having inherited sinfulness from first parents who originally broke God’s law and disrupted the world’s order. Jesus is depicted as the new Moses and the gospel a new law, which is a new law of repentance. If men and women submit to that law in baptism, they will be saved, and so avoid God’s punishment, provided they obey the laws of God’s church and the prescriptions of the Holy Scripture. At the end, God will resurrect and judge the entire human race, and those to be saved will be with God

forever in a state where order will be restored, and all will forever obey the divine commandments (2004: 38).

Bevans makes the association between Tertullian and conservatives as someone who is not himself a conservative. Bevans himself admits a bias towards radical theology and some forms of liberal theology. Some conservatives may desire more than a summary of Tertullian's teaching to describe their beliefs (for example, many would require that *faith* be mentioned in connection with salvation in order to adequately represent conservative theology). Nevertheless, there is a sense in which Tertullian is a good representative of conservative theology. For, unlike liberal theology, conservative theology has rejected philosophy as a means to interpret Scripture, and so did Tertullian. Conservative theologian, Millard J. Erickson has well pointed out that conservative theology is not connected with philosophy. Furthermore, he states that

This approach manifested itself as early as Tertullian (c. 160-230). Consider his famous lines: 'What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem? What between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians?' This approach regards philosophy as having nothing to contribute to Christian theology. In fact, the two have such different goals that the Christian is well advised to avoid contact and dialogue with philosophy completely (1985: 40).

Removing human experience and philosophy as a means of biblical interpretation is an advantage for conservative theologians who would like to discuss differing interpretations of Scripture. Rules of interpretation can be affirmed and agreed upon prior to a discussion of practice.

6.4.1 Solutions for Differing Definitions of the Gospel among Conservatives

One of the keys to understanding the relationship between gospel proclamation and conservative theology is the exclusivity of the gospel. This belief, that faith in Jesus Christ is the only hope that any individual has for spiritual salvation, is what drives mission in conservative theology. Bevans rightly notes about conservative theology and mission that there has been . . .

. . . a strong tradition that without explicit faith in Christ one has no hope of salvation. Such was the tradition, for example, that fueled the missionary zeal of Francis Xavier and William Carey, along with countless numbers of missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to such Christology, the aim of mission work was to ‘save souls’ or at least to ‘plant the church’ that would carry on the work of ‘saving the poor heathen.’ Even today, particularly among some Evangelical Christians, the explicit confession of Christ is the only way to salvation (2004: 40).

If conservative theologians are to find a solution to the tension that exists between traditional prioritism and holistic mission, the exclusivity of the gospel must be considered. The chief consideration, however, is not an agreement that faith in Jesus *alone* is the way of salvation – for that is common among conservative theologians. Rather, the issue that divides them is *how* to best convey that message. Is it primarily by means of verbal proclamation, or must it be preceded by some sort of social work? Another way of asking the same question is, are the Scriptures sufficient to draw people to genuine faith in Christ, or do people first need to see social action before they can understand the message? In practice, conservative theologians disagree on the role of social action. Again, Bevans makes a useful observation when he declares that, among conservative missionaries,

Missionary activity was almost always linked to some kind of charitable work, but this was not seen as witnessing to or bringing God’s salvation already now breaking into the world, but as a process of ‘*softening people up*,’ or as it was called in Catholic theology just prior to Vatican II, *pre-evangelization* (2004: 44, emphasis added).

This is where the heart of the conflict is exposed. Conservative theologians who believe that social action is pre-evangelism will be prone to support restrained holism. Those conservative theologians who believe that the proclamation of the Scriptures is sufficient to draw people to saving faith will support traditional prioritism. Neither theologian will neglect social action, for Bevans was correct to observe that “Missionary activity was almost always linked to some kind of charitable work” (2004: 44). He wrongly assumed, however, that all conservative theologians believed their charitable work was for the purpose of “softening people up.”

In Eric E. Wright's recent work, *A Practical Theology of Missions*, he spends an entire chapter giving an historical overview of missionary practice. He then compares that to passages such as Acts 6 and the dilemma of the overlooked widows. He then states,

We must ask ourselves, however, whether the works of mercy demonstrated in the early church occurred as a natural outworking of Christian love or as the result of strategic evangelistic planning. I am convinced that the former is the case (2010: 106).

Later on in his book, Wright gives specific examples of social action ministry by conservatively theological missionaries who saw their works of mercy, not as pre-evangelism, but rather as a natural outworking of love. In that section of his book, he writes,

It is no accident that Christians have fought against slavery and child labor, have started orphanages and homes for battered women, have initiated schools and colleges. Love for other moves some African churches to collect grain help alleviate the suffering of their community during the yearly round of drought. Love moves churches in Khartoum to take in refugees and prairie churches in North America to collect grain to ship to Sudan and Ethiopia. Authentic churches demonstrate social concern. But churches must first be planted! If we do not give priority to the planting of organized churches then centers of compassion and concern cannot be established in needy places (Wright, 2010: 335).

Regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ, the solution for those who practice conservative theology is found in identifying the role of social action. If two of these advocates examine the Scriptures together, using the same rules of hermeneutics, they should be able to determine whether or not gospel proclamation should be a priority. If they look at conservative theology's missionary history, they should be able to determine whether or not social action was performed primarily from an outflow of love or primarily for the purpose of pre-evangelism. In either case, which one is to be preferred? If they are unable to agree, it is because they cannot agree on the role of social action as it relates to gospel proclamation.

6.4.2 Solutions for Differing Views of Eschatology among Conservatives

In chapter 5 (Section 5.3.2), there was a particular eschatological difference that was emphasized. Namely, premillennialists and postmillennialists promote different practices among conservative missionaries because they have different viewpoints and terminology. The premillennialists are typically concerned more about traditional prioritism because they sense an urgency that the world needs to hear the gospel prior to an imminent judgment that is about to come every individual and all of creation. Conservative theologians who are not dispensationalists, on the other hand, might not be as convinced in traditional prioritism because their eschatological view might not see the planet and society as disposable as dispensationalists make it sound. Interestingly, from the perspective of someone outside of conservative theology, Bevans observes that present day conservatives are influenced more by dispensational than by non-dispensational eschatology. Regarding conservative missionaries in our “present time,” he says,

Many of these Christians are motivated by what has come to be called *Dispensationalism*, a belief that the history of salvation is divided into a number of distinct periods. Before the end of each time, those to be saved will experience the *rapture*, a belief that is based on 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 where Paul writes that when Jesus comes again, Christians will be ‘caught up into the air.’ Out of the urgency to have as many saved as possible, these Christians are serious engaged in missionary evangelism (Bevans, 2004: 43).

If Bevans is right, that dispensationalism is one of the main motivators for evangelism among conservatives, then perhaps the solution to the eschatological differences is found. For, if conservatives (regardless of their denominational or historical roots) can be reminded of how a *futurist* view of the end times has motivated their evangelistic efforts, then they will agree with one another about the danger of traditional prioritism slipping away. Their agreement will center not on particular eschatological models, but that the future of individual souls facing an imminent judgment demands a higher priority of gospel proclamation rather than social action.

On the other hand, at least one conservative missiologist has noted that regardless of one's eschatological position, in the past, conservative theologians have tended to be united in traditional prioritism. David J. Hesselgrave has written,

. . . historically, conservative evangelicals whose positions on the millennium question have been very different have nevertheless been able to agree on the nature of the Christian mission. Liberal conciliars, on the other hand, often have found it difficult, if not impossible, to agree on a definition of exactly what the mission of the church really is (2005: 346).

6.4.3 Solutions for Differing Views on Direct Proclamation among Conservatives

Direct proclamation ministry was contrasted with indirect proclamation ministry in chapter 5 (5.3.3). Indirect proclamation ministry is that ministry which is necessary at times because a certain government might be opposed to Christian missionaries evangelizing in their country. In those cases, some missionaries (out of necessity) go in to the closed country under the cover of another profession. They might enter in legally as an English teacher, for example, but their main motive is evangelism and Christian missionary work. The question arises, why does it appear that some missionaries prefer to enter into a country like Malawi that is not opposed to Christian missionaries?

When a missionary decides to enter into any country indirectly, the sending church should be aware of the reasons why the indirect approach was preferred. Sending churches have a responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission. In some instances, it may be necessary that an indirect approach is used. However, in other instances, an indirect approach may not be necessary or best. Each church should have to decide for itself. The problem is that many church mission committees send out missionaries based more on emotionalism and what seem to be arbitrary factors, rather than on a reasoned missionary strategy for effective fulfillment of the Commission.

Churches should be thinking about the most effective method, as well as the best stewardship of funds to support Great Commission work. After noting that studies

have shown that Christians spend about five times more money on poverty relief projects than on evangelism and church planting, D. A. Carson warned that the proclamation of the gospel is too often the missing component in "holistic" or indirect gospel ministry:

At one time, "holistic ministry" was an expression intended to move Christians beyond proclamation to include deeds of mercy. Increasingly, however, "holistic ministry" refers to deeds of mercy *without* any proclamation of the gospel—and that is not holistic. It is not even halfistic, since the deeds of mercy are not the gospel Judging by the distribution of American mission dollars, the biggest hole in our gospel is the gospel itself (2013: 357).

The solution for conservative theologians who prefer indirect mission work, is to submit themselves to a like-minded mission board that can either affirm their preference or point them toward a more direct approach. Missionary boards can also require theological training from the missionaries they send out. The fact that nearly half (46.1%) of the missionaries surveyed in Malawi (Figure 3.24) have had no formal theological training indicates that this is not a priority for churches and sending agencies. If churches in the west are concerned about the drift away from traditional prioritism, theological training for missionaries must be part of the solution. Of course, much of this depends upon where the missionaries are serving and what the goals of the missionary effort in that country entail.

6.4.4 Solutions for Differing Views on Pragmatism among Conservatives

The solutions for conservatives who have different views about pragmatism are closely related to the solutions regarding differing views of the definition of the gospel (section 6.4.1). The problem revolves around the proper role of social action. Pragmatism, however, has a special distinction – it is concerned about Christianity's acceptance by the world.

This researcher believes that a good solution to resolve the tension of pragmatism among conservative missionaries lies in a better understanding of biblical mandates. In his seminal work, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, George W. Peters suggests that

a misunderstanding of two biblical mandates distract missionaries from the one task of mission work. The first mandate is rooted in the beginning of Old Testament while the second mandate is not given until the beginning of the New Testament era.

The mandate rooted in the Old Testament, is a general mandate to all of mankind to “populate, to subjugate, to dominate, to cultivate, and to preserve (Genesis 1:28; 2:15)” (1972: 166). This first, general mandate was given to Adam and expected to be carried out by his descendants. The first mandate teaches that “It’s man’s responsibility to build a wholesome culture in which man can live as a true human being according to the moral order and creative purpose of God” (1972: 167). It should be noted that while this first mandate was interrupted by the fall of man in Genesis 3, certain basic principles of this first mandate still apply to all men and even to governments (Romans 13).

The second mandate was spoken by Jesus Christ originally to the apostles, but as they discipled other Christians, the mandate was expected to be passed on from one generation of Christians to the next. This mandate involves gospel proclamation. Peters writes,

This second mandate is carried forward by evangelization, discipleship training, church planting, church care, and benevolent ministries. We find this substantiated and outlines in: (1) the sending of the twelve (Mt 10:1-20; Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:12-16); (2) the sending of the seventy (Lk 10:1-20); (3) the further sending of the twelve (Mt 16:14-18; Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23; Ac 1:7-8); and (4) the sending of Paul (Ac 9:15-16; 26:14-20) (1972: 168).

The confusion comes when the elements of the first mandate are mingled with the elements of the second mandate. The first mandate applies to all men of all generations. The second mandate applies only to Christians as they make disciples. An individual Christian would have opportunities to respond to both mandates the second mandate is in no way dependent upon the first mandate, “since [the second mandate] is a distinct mandate arising out of different circumstances and serving different needs and purposes” (Peters, 1972:166). It is because of this that Peters wrote strongly against the danger of confusing these two mandates.

I do not find anywhere in the Bible that the first mandate comes under the biblical category of missions. It is man's assignment as man and is to be fulfilled on the human level. It is not implied in the Great Commission of our Lord to His disciples . . . It is therefore unscriptural to confuse these two mandates and speak of them on equal terms as missions and church ministries . . . We need to face these issues on the deepest level, especially when the Peace Corps is being considered as a substitute for missionary service and churches in America are eager to compete with the government in social service to prove their worth and value in the world as well as to express an incarnational gospel. It must be kept in mind that missions has a singular purpose and a specific task (1972: 170-171).

More than forty years ago, George W. Peters was sounding the alarm that the church should avoid the temptation to use social action as a means to prove its value to the world. Amazingly, before the older pragmatism of wooing the world through entertainment, Peters warned against the current day pragmatism of social action.

For conservative theology, one key solution to pragmatism is a better understanding of biblical mandates and how they apply to Christians today. If conservative Christians can recognize the separate and distinct nature of the two mandates, they will be better equipped to avoid pragmatic ideas about mission work.

6.4.5 Solutions for Differing Hermeneutics among Conservatives

For the majority of the twentieth century, a distinctive among conservative theologians was the employment of a grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture. Unlike liberal theologians who use human experience and philosophical reason as a “basic hermeneutical tool to understand the meaning of Scripture and the nature of Christianity” (Bevans, 2004: 51), most conservative theologians traditionally agreed upon a number of set rules of hermeneutics. These rules drew a clear line differentiating conservative hermeneutics from liberal hermeneutics. In the past, these rules, which were almost universally agreed upon by conservatives, provided a safe environment for conservatives to dialogue and interact with one another regarding differing theological views. As to a neutral referee, conservatives could always appeal to certain fixed rules of hermeneutics to help solve a theological disagreement. These disagreements were often debated through literature.

Sometime around the 1970s, however, these rules began to change. A new kind of hermeneutics emerged that was in one sense a hybrid hermeneutic – part conservative, part liberal. The 1980 publication of *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein*, by Anthony C. Thiselton was a landmark work that exemplified confusion and discord among conservatives. The subtitle of the book alone, highlights the confusion. Historically, conservatives did not allow philosophy to influence their hermeneutics in this way. But in Thiselton's influential work, the lines between conservative theology and liberal theology were blurred. One strong reaction comes from conservative theologian Robert L. Thomas, in his recent book, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old*. Thomas wrote:

Integration of biblical hermeneutics with philosophy is a flawed procedure . . . In merging New Testament hermeneutics with principles of philosophy, Thiselton and all those who have followed in his train have committed a basic error. They have sought to integrate a flawed human system with an infallible special revelation from God. The results of this exercise are nothing short of catastrophic for efforts to understand the message of the Bible (2002: 18-19).

Essentially, Thomas was upset because prior to this hermeneutical shift in the latter part of the twentieth century, conservatives generally agreed that there could only be one correct interpretation for a particular Scripture passage. Though conservatives might have disagreed on what the correct meaning of a text was, the rules of interpretation would help them to dialogue with one another. But when Thiselton introduced a new system of hermeneutics by conservative theologians, it brought great confusion within the conservative ranks. Consider Thomas' colorful description of the problem:

The two systems are incapable of meaningful dialogue with each other, because they use different rule books. It is as though the Los Angeles Laker basketball team were to meet the Los Angeles Dodger baseball team in an athletic event. Rules for the two sports differ so profoundly that no meaningful competition could result. Utter confusion would ensue. The same happens when evangelicals gather to discuss hermeneutics (2002: 19).

It is interesting to note that the drift away from traditional prioritism in missions has occurred during the same period of hermeneutical drift among conservatives. Sadly, unless conservatives are able to first agree on hermeneutical rules, they are unlikely to agree on a solution for their differing practices.

Iain H. Murray also recognized the same shift that Thomas writes about among conservatives around that same period of time⁵¹ (the late 1960s into the 1970s) (Murray, 2000: 51). Murray refers to *philosophical* integration as the “academic approach” and notes,

The academic approach to Scripture treats the divine element – for all practical purposes – as non-existent. History shows that when evangelicals allow that approach their teaching will sooner or later begin to look little different from that of liberals (2000: 185).

Considering Murray’s reference to history, the future of conservative theology does not look bright. Either, conservative theology, with its long history dating back at least to Tertullian, will morph into liberalism. Or, a new break will happen in which conservatives sever ties with liberal hybrids in their camp and redraw their own boundaries. If the latter happens, then the solution for differing hermeneutics among conservatives should be natural. Once they can agree upon the rules of hermeneutics, they can dismiss interpretations that overstep their boundaries. In the mean time, at least from a hermeneutical perspective, conservatives (in general) are not as distinct as Bevans and others might depict.

Bevans and Schroder are right, however, to focus on constants throughout all ages, contexts, and the diverse theological perspectives. Some liberal theologian dismiss conservative theology as simplistic or naïve and it misses the broad understanding of Scripture.⁵² They believe that to say that each particular text has only one meaning takes away the science of hermeneutics. Some conservatives have equally low views

⁵¹ Johannes Aagaard also recognizes that in the 1960s it was a “reality” that there was “a trend to the left” though he argues that in other respects the 1960s were characterized by a “trend toward the left.” This was especially true in the 1960s as church leaders opposed the ecumenical movement (Aagaard, 1973: 25). However, it should be noted that both Thomas (2002) and Murray (2000) wrote much more recently than Aagaard (1973) and they were looking at the issue from a conservative perspective.

⁵² For more on this, see Van Gelder and Zscheile who say, “It is necessary to use a missional hermeneutic to read Scripture in order to understand the full intent of God’s mission” (2011: 7).

of the science employed by liberals and liberation theologians. There is a distain expressed by many conservatives that philosophy can be integrated with hermeneutics. To think of conservative theology as simplistic or naïve, however, neglects to recognize some key similarities in the hermeneutical process among both conservatives and liberals. Both of them use rules of interpretation. Both of them are seeking a single meaning for the text. The liberal is looking for a single meaning for his own context, but the conservative is looking for a single meaning for all contexts. Both theologians are susceptible to holding an errant position. Therefore both theologians need to be cautious and thorough in their handling of the Scriptures. A key difference between the two theologies is one of contexts and time, not of effort. This is an important distinction for liberals to understand the solutions in hermeneutics for conservative theologians.

6.4.6 Solutions for Differing Views of Jesus' Ministry and Miracles among Conservatives

The key issue for conservatives surrounding the different views of Jesus' ministry and miracles concerns the purpose of Jesus' actions. As chapter 5 pointed out (5.3.7), those who believe that Christ's miracles are a model of compassion meant to point the church towards social action would be more inclined to support a holistic mission model. Conversely, those who believe that Christ's miracles were for the purpose of confirming his message and Messiahship would be more inclined to support a traditional prioritist model of mission.

The solution to these two different views are once again tied to the issue of hermeneutics. Once the hermeneutical issue is resolved among conservatives, then productive resolutions can be discovered. Many of the potential solutions relating to Jesus' ministry and miracles are related to the unity of thought among conservatives.

It is interesting that Bevens doesn't seem to recognize the division among conservatives in his 2004 book, when the division was evident to others decades before that. For example, Bevens quotes John Stott as a representative for the conservative view of salvation:

Evangelical theologian John Stott insists that there is certainly a connection between salvation, physical and mental health and political and social liberation. ‘Nevertheless,’ he concludes, ‘we still have to affirm that they [health and liberation] are not the salvation which God is offering to human beings in Christ now.’ Stott goes on to quote the Lausanne Covenant to the effect that while both evangelism and sociopolitical involvement are Christian duties, ‘reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation’ (2004: 45).

Bevans portrays Stott as a stalwart of conservative theology because of his narrow definition of salvation. Some conservatives, however, portray Stott as one who divided conservatives at Lausanne because he opened the door for a more liberal perspective to infiltrate conservative theology. For example, Arthur P. Johnston, another conservative who attended Lausanne, has written:

The basic theology of Lausanne was sound and clear, even though it opened the door to broad evangelical viewpoints. . . . John Stott presented a critique of the ecumenical theology of evangelism in his introductory study entitled, ‘The Biblical Basis of Evangelism.’ He lucidly distinguished the biblical exegetical content of such words as mission, evangelism, dialogue, salvation, and conversion from their ecumenical usage, and thus rendered an invaluable service to contemporary evangelical theology. ‘Mission,’ however, was reinterpreted in a broader sense, to include both evangelism and service” (1978: 300-301).

Stott, of course, is one of the prime examples of a conservative theologian who interprets Jesus' commission to the disciples in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you,” differently from many other conservatives. Stott interprets this statement to mean, “The Father sent Me to evangelize *and* to heal the sick and help the poor; therefore, I am sending you to do both as well” (2008: 30). Stott’s *incarnational model* has been criticized by Andreas Kostenberger (1998: 217), D.A. Carson (1991:566), and more recently, DeYoung and Gilbert who have written,

Stott’s reading of John 20:31 has been very influential. There are however, two problems. First, it can be misleading to summarize Jesus’s mission as one of service . . . [if one means] that Jesus’s mission was to meet human need, whether spiritual or physical. . . . Second, it is unwise to assume that because we are sent as Jesus was sent, we have the exact same mission he had (2011: 54-57).

John Stott cannot be seen as a general representative of conservative theology on issues relating to the commissions, salvation, and a number of other issues because there is a significant number of authors who point to Stott, not as someone who unites them, but as someone who divides them. John Piper criticized Stott because Stott was unsure if “conscious faith” was “necessary” for salvation (Piper, 1993: 118). In addition to this, there is also a controversy among conservatives surrounding Stott’s belief in annihilationalism (Piper, 1993: 120-124).

These observations, along with the ones in the section about hermeneutics (6.4.5) suggest that there is a current uproar in conservative theology. The solution regarding different views of Jesus’ ministry and miracles is for conservative theologians to agree upon a hermeneutic. Those who are unified in their hermeneutic should be able to agree upon Jesus’ purpose in ministry.

6.4.7 Solutions for Differing Views as to How the Early Church Filled Jesus’ Commissions

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, three New Testament passages were considered that relate to how the early church fulfilled Jesus’ commissions (Acts 6:1-7; Acts 14:1-7; Ephesians 4:11-13). One’s application of these texts is instrumental in solving the different views as to how the early church filled Jesus’ commissions. There is no book in the New Testament that gives a better history of the beginning of Christian mission work than the book of Acts. In Roland Allen’s book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?*, the author writes,

Today if a man ventures to suggest that there may be something in the methods by which St. Paul attained such wonderful results worthy of our careful attention, and perhaps our imitation, he is in danger of being accused of revolutionary tendencies. Yet this is manifestly not as it should be (1962: 3-4).

Another writer says, “If it is a book of ‘acts’ at all . . . Luke intended it as a record of the missionary activity and the words of the exalted Christ through the creative power of his Spirit and his Word” (Reymond, 2002: 32).

Acts 6 was presented as a clear example of an early church situation where a precedent for holistic ministry might have been set. However, the priorities of teaching and prayer were emphasized for the church leadership.

In Acts 14, the normal pattern for Paul's ministry was displayed in that chapter. Paul's ministry focused on proclamation. It began with proclamation which polarized his audience. Paul made a high priority of planting churches. This priority was maintained even when he was in risk of persecution. Though he usually moved on to another city when persecuted, it was not uncommon for him to return at a later time to cities where he had formerly been persecuted. His purpose for returning was to teach, encourage, and strengthen the local churches. Paul's priorities, as exemplified in Acts 14, focused the proclamation of God's Word.

An example of a related passage from an Epistle was included in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Ephesians 4:11-13 reveals a danger that could occur if traditional prioritism is neglected. If missionaries neglect their responsibilities, others in the body of Christ will neglect their responsibilities. Those who see that missionaries ("evangelists" as they are referred to in Ephesians 4:11) have a primary responsibility to shepherd people with the Word of God (as Phillip and Timothy did) can see that if they neglect their responsibility others will not be equipped for their works of service. This researcher is contending that, according to Ephesians 4:11-13, missionaries (as well as pastors) have the primary responsibility to equip the saints through the preaching and teaching of Word of God so that the saints themselves can do the work of service.

When Paul wrote II Timothy 4:5 to encourage Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" it was inextricably tied to the preceding words in II Timothy 4:2, "preach the word." Phillip had proclaimed the gospel in Samaria (Acts 8:5) and according to Acts 8:40, "he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea," which is where he was in Acts 21:8 when he was referred to as an "evangelist." The two examples given to the church of evangelists were missionary preachers. What examples do we have in Scripture of missionaries who did not preach?

An important consideration for those who are advocates of holistic mission is that it is difficult to find an example of a missionary who was devoted to holistic mission. The fact that a focus on social action is conspicuously absent in Paul's letters should be a concern for those who are promoting it today. As one reviewer in *Bibliotheca Sacra* noted,

. . . the Apostle Paul and his associates did not turn "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6) by organizing civil rights demonstrations and establishing food banks. Instead, they did it by preaching Jesus Christ. True, the time may be at hand when churches need to establish soup kitchens, food banks, and unemployment counseling services for their members and their neighborhoods; but such ministries should be coupled with and subservient to the central ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Anon., 1983: 174).

While it is true that Paul worked diligently at one stage of his ministry to collect an offering for the poor in Jerusalem, it should be noted that the offering was specifically for the poor in the church in Jerusalem who were suffering because of persecution. This was not an offering for the poor and needy of the world. Furthermore, Paul's collection for Jerusalem was unique. It was for a church that he had not planted nor had he spent time teaching there. There is no record that Paul ever collected funds or provided physical relief for any church that he planted or led. Rolland Allen articulates this point well when he notes that Paul,

. . . did not take financial support to his converts . . . Every province, every church, was financially independent. The Galatians are exhorted to support their teachers. Every church is instructed to maintain its poor. There is no hint from beginning to end of the Acts and Epistles of any one church depending upon another, with the single exception of the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (1962: 51).

Does this mean that it would be wrong for churches today to collect and offering for needy saints elsewhere in the world? Certainly not. Would it be wrong for Christians today to give financial help towards someone outside of the church that was in need? This researcher would say that Christians today have freedom to do that. Although there is nothing inherently or morally wrong with giving to the needy outside of the church, Acts and the New Testament Epistles do not emphasize this focus.

6.5 Practical Solutions for Those Who Desire to Reverse the Drift

What can be done to reverse the trend that pulls missionaries away from traditional prioritism? This is a universal problem among missionaries. How do you minister to the poorest people in the world with the love of Christ without interrupting or hindering that work to help them with their desperate physical needs? The evangelist, D. L. Moody once said that Christians should not go to the world with a loaf of bread in one hand and a Bible in the other, lest sinners take the loaf and ignore the Bible (Pierard, 1970: 88). The question is, how can you really preach about the Bread of life to people who have no bread whatsoever? A Malawian pastor once lamented to this researcher that he was troubled by the method missionaries used more than 100 years ago that caused the church to be dependent upon the West. His concern was that the early missionaries used to help the people with food and schooling to the extent that whenever there was a need they learned to rely upon the missionary. In the Malawian pastor's opinion, that pattern was passed on to the Malawian pastors when the missionaries left. Malawian people often join churches primarily for the assurance that when trials come, their physical needs would be met by their pastor. The idea that Malawian Christians should take care of their pastor's physical needs as he ministers to their spiritual needs is not the norm in Malawi. Recently, this researcher was involved in a training program for pastors in Malawi. He asked more than forty pastors if they were supported fully by their church. Less than 10 were able to respond positively.

How does one reverse the trend? How do missionaries preach the Word without being sidetracked with the good work of helping to meet the real physical needs of desperate Malawians? How can missionaries minister to the physical needs around them and at the same time encourage Malawian Christians to care for the physical needs of their pastor? These are all difficult questions and there are no "magic

bullet⁵³” solutions. However, this researcher does have some proposed solutions to this very difficult issue.

6.5.1 Practical Solutions for Missionaries in Malawi

If an individual missionary in Malawi recognizes the priority of gospel proclamation and wants to ensure that he or she does not drift from that priority, certain steps can be taken. Specifically, there are two key ingredients that are essential. The first involves an intentionally focused support team. The second involves a healthy local church. Ideally, both ingredients will be present.

There are certain areas of Malawi where healthy churches do not exist and where real physical needs are plentiful. The idea that a lone missionary with a limited amount of time can effectively disciple others while trying to orchestrate holistic mercy missionary is naively idealistic. Theoretically, the concept of holistic missions is enticing: planting maize alongside an African and discipling him at the same time sounds ideal. The problem is that it so rarely works. Experience shows that the social justice missionary ends up spending the majority of his time sorting out problems and issues that arise on the social side. This researcher spent a year working on a holistic project in Malawi in 1997-98. He was responsible for the oversight of twenty-six Bible college students, fifty goats, four hundred chickens, and a large agricultural garden. At daybreak, the first thing on the mind of this researcher was that the eggs needed to get to the market. All through the day water needed to be pumped, animals needed to be fed, fuel was needed for cooking and lanterns, and much more. Many nights were spent chasing away chicken thieves and wild dogs. Illustrations of this nature could be multiplied endlessly: in social action mission, distraction is the norm, not the exception.

This is why a team of missionaries working together can be beneficial. If one missionary is focused on an important social action work (for example medical work) it would be nearly impossible to keep gospel proclamation a priority without the help

⁵³ In 1940 a film was produced entitled, *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet*. The film was a biographical story about the cure a disease. Since then, the term “magic bullet” has become an idiom for a once-for-all cure for societal problems.

of other missionaries or mature church members. If the doctor's priority is gospel proclamation but his or her time is consumed with treating patients, then it would be essential for the doctor to have other missionaries or mature Christians to evangelize and follow up the patients who receive treatment.

Along with team members that are working together to keep gospel proclamation a priority, a second key ingredient is a local church. The church should not be an afterthought in mission, and it often is. A plausible scenario would involve a non-governmental organization (NGO) member who visits Malawi and sees a need for orphan care. He reports this need to his NGO, and they recruit missionaries to go and establish an orphanage. Soon there are lots of children and hired adult caregivers and staff members all living and functioning well on newly acquired land. Early on, the missionaries take turns sharing devotionals on Sundays in one of the buildings at the orphanage. As the children grow, the missionaries report a growing need for a church to be established. A sizeable group has been meeting at the orphanage each Sunday including some local villagers. The group has become too large now for the missionaries to shepherd. Besides the Sunday school program for the children, there is the discipleship that is needed for a growing number of adults, not to mention funerals and an occasional wedding. Some of the staff workers are having an interpersonal dispute and a pastor would really be helpful to counsel them through it. Pretty soon, the NGO starts to look for a pastor, but it is difficult to find one who has been trained. The scenario can go on, but essentially the cart is before the horse. The church was an afterthought because the pressing need of orphan care seen by the NGO member.

The church should not be an afterthought, but rather church planting and strengthening should be at the forefront of mission work. Every social action missionary in Malawi who desires to make a priority of gospel proclamation should ask themselves two questions. Firstly, is there a local church that can effectively disciple those who come to faith in Christ as a result of our holistic mission? If not, is there a team of people I can work with (African or expatriate) who are able to help us establish a healthy church? Even if there is a local church that can effectively disciple new converts, the second question is: do I have a team of people who can follow up

with people to whom I minister? The solution for holistic mission can be summed up in one word: church. A healthy, gospel-proclaiming, God glorifying church should be at the forefront of every mission, as it was in the book of Acts.

6.5.2 Practical Solutions for Western Churches

A key ingredient that will help missionaries in Malawi maintain a traditional prioritist approach in mission needs to come from sending churches in the West. It is critical that the church mission committee be aware of the tension that exists between a traditional prioritist model of mission and a holistic model. Keeping in mind that traditional prioritism does not exclude social action, and that some individual missionaries will spend more time on social action, there are two important reminders for churches that support these missionaries. First, churches that wish to maintain traditional prioritism in mission should be aware of the percentage of missionaries they are sending out with a proclamation focus. Second, individual missionaries that spend the majority of their time on social action should be connected with a national church and ideally with other missionaries (or national church members) who are involved in proclamation. In other words, the idea of a missionary to Malawi serving in a social action role, without an association with a healthy Malawian church (or church planting effort) does not support traditional prioritism. Admittedly, it may be that many churches in the West have no idea what percentage of the missionaries they support are involved in social action as opposed to a proclamation ministry. Likewise, many churches may not be aware of their missionaries' association with a national church. Identifying these two characteristics are the prerequisites steps for a church to maintain traditional prioritism in their mission program.

An example of a church in the United States that recently went through the process of refocusing their missionary program is Calvary Bible Church in Burbank, California. Calvary Bible Church is a well-established church that has been at their current location for more than fifty years. In the 1990s the church went through a doctrinal refocusing process. The elders of the church, believing that the church had drifted doctrinally, desired to return to their historic doctrinal positions. An intentional effort was made to do this as they hired a completely new pastoral staff in the 1990s. The

new pastors' doctrinal beliefs were closer to where the church had been in the early 1960s than to where they were in the 1990s. Over the years, many ministries of the church went through an examination process to see how they might best support the historic doctrines of that church. The missionary 'closet' was the last room in the church to be 'cleaned out.' The elders of the church appointed new members to the mission committee to help with this task. As one of those members has written,

As new leaders on the Missions Team we were being handed a . . . 30 year old program and being handed a group of missionaries that we really knew very little about. We were faced with some startling questions like 'who are these missionaries?' and 'how did we get them?' and 'what do they believe?' We wondered if these missionaries were headed in the same solid doctrinal direction that our new pastors were . . . (Cullen, 2014: 1-2).

The Missions Team at Calvary Bible Church decided to take four practical steps in order to refocus their mission strategy. First, they examined a history of missionary work. Second, they decided to develop a biblical mission strategy. This was followed by an evaluation of their missionaries, and lastly an application of their new strategy. These four steps should be helpful to any church which may be concerned that they have drifted away from traditional prioritism.

6.5.2.1 Step 1: Examine Historical Missionary Work

In order to understand missionary work today, it is beneficial to have an understanding of the origins of the modern missionary movement. One of the earliest missionaries and trend setters in the modern missionary movement was John Elliot, an English Puritan who lived from 1604-1690. Elliot became a missionary to the American Indians. His primary mission involved the proclamation of the gospel to American Indians in the Massachusetts area. He not only established many churches but he translated the entire Bible into the Massachusett language. This Native American Bible was published in 1663.

Another early pioneer of the modern missionary movement was David Brainerd (1718-1747). Though Brainerd died at age 29 and only served as a missionary for approximately three years, his work and convictions had a profound influence on

many other missionaries. Like John Elliot, David Brainerd was a missionary to American Indians. Before he died, he was nursed by the daughter of the well-known New England theologian and pastor, Jonathan Edwards. Edwards later published an edited version of Brainerd's diary which described his ministry to Indians in New England. This ministry included a church plant, translation work, as well as caring for physical needs. Edwards' version of David Brainerd's diary quickly became popular. After John Wesley read it, he urged "Let every preacher read carefully over the *Life of David Brainerd*" (Piper, 2001: 131). Henry Martyn, William Carey, and Jim Elliot are among many other modern-era missionaries who were influenced by Brainerd's diary. Jonathan Edwards was so influenced by the diary that towards the end of his life he became a missionary himself to a tribe of Mohican Indians.

In 1793, William Carey and his family set sail from England to Calcutta India as missionaries to that eastern land. Many consider William Carey to be the "father of modern missions" (González, 1984: 306). Carey's ministry was one primarily of proclamation as well as translation. He translated the Scriptures into Bengali as well as Sanskrit. Other prominent men in the late 1700s and early 1800s were Charles Simeon and Henry Martyn. Simeon was a British clergyman who was influential in helping to found the Church Missionary Society (Hopkins, 1977: 97). Henry Martyn was a contemporary and friend of Simeon. After hearing Simeon speak about William Carey and then reading Edwards' publication of David Brainerd's diary, Martyn decided to become a missionary to India with the Church Missionary Society. Though Martyn struggled as a preacher, "his God-given brilliance with languages resulted in the translation of the New Testament and other Christian literature into the languages of India, Persia, and Arabia" (Cromarty, 2005: 20).

In 1825, a small booklet was published by Anthony Norris Groves, a man who would later become a missionary to Iraq as well as India. His booklet, was entitled *Christian Devotedness* and it was subtitled "The Consideration of Our Savior's Precept: Lay not for yourselves treasures on earth." The booklet encouraged Christians to live simply and use their resources for the spread of the gospel message. The booklet is said to have made "an astonishing impact . . . [among] preachers both famous and obscure" (Dann, 2004: 22). George Muller, F.F. Bruce, Hudson Taylor, C.T. Studd, Jim Elliot,

Amy Carmichael, and Edith Schaeffer are all said to have been influenced by this small book that promoted faith missions. In fact, Groves' booklet was said to have been one of three outstanding books in the 19th century,

... books that Christians bought in bulk and sent them to their friends, books that transformed lives and changed priorities. They were *China's Spiritual Needs and Claims* by Hudson Taylor (published in 1865), *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings* with George Muller (1837) and, of course, *Christian Devotedness* (1825). In point of time, Groves' work came first, and it laid the foundation on which the other two were built (Dann, 2004: 530).

It is significant that, as one surveys the modern missionary movement from the 17th to the early part of the 20th century, traditional prioritism prevails. Gospel proclamation was primary for the first three hundred years of the modern missionary era. However, another trend that existed in the early 1900s but became popular in the latter half of the 20th century was holism.

Holism – incarnationists seek the extension of Christ's kingdom over the whole of life and society. They don't think so much of priorities. They think of witness in terms of "word, deed, and sign" and of Jesus Christ as the Transformer of societies and cultures as well as individuals. The pivotal work in opening the door to this kind of holism was John Stott's seminal little 1975 volume, *The Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should be doing Now*. Stott supplemented it in 1992 with *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World* (Hesselgrave, 2005: 146).

This shift in missionary paradigms, from traditional prioritism to holistic mission, is having a tremendous effect on the practice of missionary work today. The de-emphasis on proclamation means less formal Bible training among missionaries. As western societies became more enamored with social action trends, missionaries became less focused on the traditional work of gospel proclamation, translation, and church planting. This has caused some frustration from members of many mission boards who have noticed this shift. One such board member reports this about the shift of missionary attention towards physical aid:

While this aid is sorely needed and is an admirable and worthy cause, it is often sent by churches with mission teams that have made the

relief their primary motive and not the spread of the gospel or evangelistic concern. Many missionaries are caught up in hype of relief coordination, while abandoning the call to share the Word and disciple new believers in the Truth. From the mission board view, too often procedures and missionaries have been adopted and sent out that reflect current para-church relief trends and emphasis that are from non-Christian societal influences, devoid or very weak in the gospel presentation, where it becomes hard to distinguish societal relief from gospel based, spiritual care for the spiritually depraved. Our church had adopted and been promoting these kind of missionaries and ministries, because it made the congregation feel good and brought in lots of donations and was easy to promote (Cullen, 2014: 4).

Understanding that a recent paradigm shift has taken place in the history of modern missions is a valuable step for church mission committees to take. Without this understanding, many new members of mission committees might be unaware that the focus of missions has recently changed. This lack of knowledge might easily lead to a greater and unfortunate shift away from gospel proclamation in missions.

6.5.2.2 Step 2: Create a Biblical Mission Strategy

A second step that a church should take as it endeavors to refocus its mission program is to develop a strategy of mission work that is based on Scriptural principles. This is a beneficial exercise for any church's mission committee. Rather than relying on others, those who are involved in directing a church missionary program should have a firsthand understanding of what the Scriptures teach about missionary work. Members of a mission committee should study God's Word both individually and together as a group, seeking to answer the following questions: What are the normative models for mission in Scripture? What are the key commands in Scripture that relate to missionary work? Which passages direct the church to care for physical needs of those outside of the church and how does that relate to passages that instruct the church to care for the physical needs of those within the church?

Too long America has propagated missions on the basis of philanthropy, Christian duty and responsibility, gospel necessity, and church expansion. These are not altogether unworthy motives but they are not the deepest motives nor do they generate the highest degree of spiritual dynamism. We need theological thinking in missions. What are the deepest foundations of missions? What are the most legitimate goals and means of missions? What is the nature of Christian missions? How is missions related to the church? Is missions an

abiding or terminal phenomenon? What are the real dynamics of missions? What is the relation of the gospel to eschatology? Some are some of the basic questions which theology must answer (Peters, 1972: 12-13).

As Calvary Bible Church set out to refocus its mission program, they endeavored to search the Scriptures to develop a mission strategy for their church.

We undertook with our missions team, a detailed survey of the biblical passages related to missions activity and let that be the guide for which we would refocus our missions policy and strategy. Starting with the Gospels and working through the book of Acts, we came up with the commands and examples that would guide our approach to missions, and shape our policies and strategy (Cullen, 2014: 5).

The result of their study was that this church mission committee observed four key activities among missionaries in Scripture. They viewed church planting as a primary activity, followed by church strengthening and evangelism. Finally, they noted the importance of support roles in missionary work. Not that every church would need to limit themselves to these four activities, but for this particular church, they decided to pattern their missionary strategies after each of these activities. In fact, one result was that they decided to designate their missionary budget into four categories. Forty percent of their budget was designated toward church planting, thirty percent toward church strengthening, twenty percent toward evangelism, and the remaining ten percent was designated for support roles in mission. Again, this is not a formula that every church must follow: this is merely an example of a church that developed a mission strategy from their understanding of what the Scriptures teach about missionary work.

An essential part of creating a biblical mission strategy is to include the entire congregation in the process. Once the mission committee has developed a mission strategy, it would be wise for the strategy to be presented to the church leaders and elders. There may be theological issues that have been overlooked or misunderstood by the mission committee, therefore a review from an elder board would be beneficial not only for the committee but for the leaders as well. Once the church leadership and the mission committee are all in agreement with the mission strategy, the congregation needs to be brought into the process. It would be a terrible oversight not

to include the entire congregation in this process. Not only does the congregation need to support the strategy financially, but it provides an excellent opportunity for spiritual enrichment among the members of the congregation. Any time members of a church congregation can grow in their understanding of how God's Word applies to practice, God is glorified. This was certainly the case when the congregation at Calvary Bible Church was included in the process of learning how the Scriptures related to their new strategy of mission.

Of primary importance in this endeavor was to communicate that a process was taking place and that it was biblically based. We did this through our communication at each event that promoted missions or missionaries, through written articles that the congregation received, through Sunday school teaching and even from the Pulpit. We highlighted ministries and missionaries that did church planting and strengthening to give the congregation the impression of the importance of those kinds of ministries. Then we invited different members of the congregation to be part of the meetings with our existing missionaries and then with new potential church planter missionaries so that a feel for where we were at, and where we were going, was more prevalent within the congregation and not just in the minds of the missions team and the elders. The new strategy was illustrated graphically and posted on the missions bulletin board in the church lobby for the congregation to see. The church website was eventually used to show our new approach to missions (Cullen, 2014: 8-9).

6.5.2.3 Step 3: Evaluation of Missionaries

After a mission strategy has been developed and accepted by a congregation, the next step in refocusing a mission program is to evaluate missionaries currently supported by the church. This can be a difficult and somewhat tumultuous process. The dangers include the improper categorization of missionaries as well as misunderstandings between church members and missionaries. When financial support is at stake, some may misinterpret a missionary evaluation and be offended by the process. When Calvary Bible Church began to evaluate their missionaries, they received some negative feedback, especially from missionaries who had very little contact with CBC prior to going to the mission field. In one response to a renewal letter sent to a missionary supported by CBC, the missionary neglected to sign the

church's doctrinal statement and made a sarcastic statement about having to restate his conversion.⁵⁴

Every effort should be taken to evaluate the missionaries in a loving, personal manner and the purposes for the evaluation should be made clear. In some cases, it might have been many years since the missionary has visited the supporting church. It is quite possible that some members of a mission committee have never personally met many of the missionaries that are being supported by a particular church. Because of distance, the difficulty of communication, and the temptation to make quick assessments of missionary activity, much time should be taken to evaluate missionaries. The process could take years.

One way to ensure a more accurate evaluation would be to invite each missionary to meet with the committee so that personal interaction could take place. Unlike former eras, where missionaries might be away for decades, current-day missionaries often return for furloughs more frequently for shorter periods of time. Many missionaries return from the field every two to four years. Therefore, if a mission committee wanted to meet with each missionary for a personal interview the committee would be wise to write each missionary inquiring when is his or her next furlough and asking if he or she could plan a personal visit to the church.

Prior to meeting with the missionary personally, the mission committee can send a letter briefly explaining that they are attempting to refocus their mission effort and ask them to fill out a "Missionary Renewal Form." Such a form can provide a way:

... to carefully ask questions about them and their ministry in order for them to update us and where they were at in many areas, from goals to problems to financial status. The Renewal Form also let us see if the missionary was still doing the same ministry as what they were originally sent out for (Cullen, 2014: 9).

In the example of Calvary Bible Church, there was a surprising result from their evaluations of missionary priorities. At that time, the missionaries they supported did

⁵⁴ These observations were noted in the minutes of a Missions Leadership Team meeting on October 10, 2002.

not represent their new missionary strategy. In fact, their strategy was far from their reality. Their strategy was to support church planting with approximately 40% of their funds, but only 17.9% was going towards church planting. Their new goal was to support church strengthening with 30% of their mission budget, but only 3.3% was going towards church strengthening. Likewise evangelism (and evangelistic ministries involved in social action), of which their desire was to designate 20% of their support was receiving more than 33.8%. And nearly one third of their budget (29.8%) was going toward support missionaries and organizations, which should have only been receiving about 10% of their budget according to their new strategy. Essentially, their current practice was not in balance with their new strategy.

New Mission Strategy		2003
Church Planting –	Ideally 40%	5 missionaries – 17.9%
Church Strengthening –	Ideally 30%	1 missionary – 3.3%
Evangelism / Social Action –	Ideally 20%	9 missionaries – 33.8%
Support Ministries –	Ideally 10%	9 missionaries – 29.8%

Figure 6.1 – CBC New Mission Strategy Compared to 2003 Reality

It would not be easy for the Mission Leadership Team (MLT) at Calvary Bible Church to transition from where they were to where they wanted to be, but at least they had the advantage of knowing where they wanted to be. This proved to be a great benefit for that committee. As they noted,

With the new biblically-based policy and a specific strategy based on ministry categories, we were then able to have a useful and biblically based yardstick for evaluating existing missionaries, new missions opportunities or to deal with requested changes in support. This helped to eliminate emotional and arbitrary responses to new requests, and allowed us to focus on a goal that could be quantified to a certain extent and qualified by a biblical focus in missions (Cullen, 2014: 10).

6.5.2.4 Step 4: Application of Mission Strategy

If the results from the research relating to missionaries in Malawi are representative of global missionary work, then churches may find it difficult to designate a large portion of their budget toward church planters. The trend in mission work is pointing toward an increase of social action missionaries, not missionaries that focus primarily

on church strengthening and church planting through traditional prioritism. This proved to be the case for the missionary committee at Calvary Bible Church. It was difficult for them to find like-minded missionaries interested in church planting. In the CBC Mission Leadership Team minutes from March 25, 2004, “it was decided that no increases would be forthcoming to missionaries in the 2nd and 3rd tiers (missionaries in church-strengthening or evangelistic roles) which could deter us from our main thrust” (Calvary, 2004). Rather than use funds designated for church planting efforts for any other purpose it was decided that

Any surplus monies will be allowed to accumulate for a new missionary candidate that would fit the criteria, i.e., a local person going for church planting, hopefully from this congregation, for whom we could assume a large percentage of his/their total support needs (Calvary, 2004).

Interestingly, in those same minutes from March of 2004, a Malawian pastor had written to Calvary Bible Church to ask for help in training. The church had decided to respond with a letter from their pastor and sent a collection of training material.

Several months after the decision was made to allow monies to accumulate until a church planter could be sent out from CBC, some pressing needs from many current missionaries prompted the CBC Missions Leadership Team (MLT) to make increases to the support levels of six current missionaries. In their minutes from their July 15, 2004 meeting they noted,

Although according to the MLT strategy our present funding indicates an imbalance with too few missionaries in church-planting roles on the field, the above increases reflect our concern for those to whom we are already committed and our desire to be responsive to their needs. (Calvary, 2004b).

This is an example of the difficult decisions that mission committees are faced with when applying a mission strategy. Although there is an appropriate desire to avoid making decisions on emotional and arbitrary factors, mission committees are often faced with genuine needs of missionaries that appeal to hearts with genuine compassion. It is important that mission committees try to maintain the balance of maintaining their strategy but also demonstrating care and compassion as needs arise

that may not fit their strategy completely. In such cases it is helpful if mission committees designate a certain percentage of their strategically earmarked funds for benevolence or urgent needs. Or, perhaps they can be creative by redirecting some of their needs to other areas of the church budget, such as a deacons' fund or elders' benevolence fund. This would be much easier with one-time needs, rather than ongoing additional support for missionaries.

As mission committees implement their mission strategies, it is important that they do so with great care and compassion. This is true especially in cases where a missionary's financial support is being discontinued or decreased. When missionary committees follow certain steps to refocus their mission program, there are bound to be significant changes. If a committee does a historical study, develops a biblical strategy, and then evaluates their missionaries, there may be some missionaries that no longer fit into the new strategy. A church may decide to discontinue support for that missionary. In such cases, care for that missionary would be best demonstrated if the reasons for discontinuation of support were shared with the missionary. In general and if possible, it is always better to make personal contact with the missionary and the more personal, the better. In some cases, a phone call might be the only option, but it would be preferable if a face to face conversation could occur. In either case, a letter of explanation should follow. Also, if the church is able to decrease its support over time, rather than cut off the missionary's support all in one blow, it would be easier for the missionary to seek additional support from other churches.

In the case of Calvary Bible Church, those missionaries that no longer fit into the new strategy were dealt with in a compassionate way. If financial support was being discontinued, the missionaries were notified that it would gradually decrease over a number of months in order to give the missionary time to replace that support from elsewhere. Some missionaries were even told that if they were unable to replace that support by the time it was discontinued from CBC, they could write the church asking for an extension and the church would gladly continue their support for another designated period of months allowing the missionary even more time to replace that support. This is prudent, especially in some cases where the missionaries had not changed their focus, but the church had.

Surprisingly, in the example of Calvary Bible Church, when some missionaries and organizations were initially contacted to participate in the refocusing process, they never responded. After repeated contact had been made with one such organization with no response, the decision was made to terminate their financial support non-incrementally (Calvary, 2003).⁵⁵ This can be an appropriate response. In some cases, when missionaries or organizations do not respond to letters from churches, it may be an indication that they do not need the financial support from that church. In rare instances, when a church loses contact with a missionary for many years, the missionary might no longer be serving as a missionary and yet support is still being sent to his or her organization. Also, in some cases, missionaries can be elusive about their actual responsibilities while on the mission field. In Calvary Bible Church's Mission Leadership Team minutes from January of 2003, there is an indication that a certain missionary had been contacted but was not clear on what he was actually doing in the Third World country in which he was residing. The minutes state, "We will continue communication with him to establish the exact nature of his ministry" (Calvary, 2003). Two months later, after several members of the Mission Leadership Team had been in contact with him, they noted, "He advised us on his doctrinal position, but none of the MLT could describe exactly what his ministry does" (Calvary, 2003b). They also expressed concerns over the fact that this particular missionary had not visited their church in over ten years, although he had been in the area for studies a number of times.

This brings up an important issue for churches desiring to implement a new mission strategy. One often overlooked, but very important, role of a missionary is the amount of time he or she spends teaching and fellowshiping with a supporting congregation while on furlough. If missionaries are not personally involved with members of a congregation, it is doubtful that those members will be as enthusiastic about missions as they would be if they knew the missionaries better. When a church interviews a new missionary seeking support, or if a church is trying to implement a new mission strategy, it would be beneficial to ask the missionaries how often they plan to visit. Would they be willing to spend 25% of their furlough ministry time

⁵⁵ This decision and the name of the organization are both recorded in the January 16, 2003 minutes of the Calvary Bible Church Missions Leadership Team meeting. The decision also indicated that the committee would wait for elder approval of their decision.

ministering to the members of a congregation that supports them 25% of their overall need? These are good kinds of questions to bring up when restructuring a missionary program that cares not only for the missionaries, but also for the congregation sending them. Those missionaries that do not have time to visit with congregations supporting them would be more likely to have their support discontinued during a time of refocus than those who are involved with the sending congregation personally. Of course, sending churches must continually be reminded to be gracious toward the missionaries during a refocus process.

Another way to implement a new strategy while still caring for current missionaries that might not fit into that strategy is to wait for attrition. Historically, many missionaries would spend three or four decades on the mission field. This is no longer the case. According to the quantitative study this researcher did in Malawi, approximately seventy-two percent of the missionaries surveyed had only served in Malawi for five years or less. Only about fifteen percent of missionaries surveyed had been in Malawi for longer than ten years. The fact that the majority of missionaries in Malawi have been in Malawi for less than a decade (in spite of Malawi's long history of welcoming missionaries) suggests that there is a relatively high turnover rate among missionaries.

Whether by gradual discontinuation of funds, immediate discontinuation of funds, or through attrition, mission committees that restructure their mission efforts should be mindful of the manner in which they implement the application of a new mission strategy. Patience, communication, and care are key ingredients in a new mission strategy. The transition process at Calvary Bible Church took several years, but the strategy was eventually implemented – and the transition was done in a manner that conveyed care and concern for the missionaries as well as the mission.

So, over a number of years, we said goodbye to more than a handful of missionaries and missions ministries due to doctrinal differences . . . [or] just not fitting in with our strategy focus. Yet, we were also able to renew and increase support to some missionaries who were focused on the more weighted categories. And as we examined our existing missionaries, we saw that some of them would have a tough time of being supported by us if they had just walked in the door and asked for support at this point in our reevaluation of our missions program. But since they had been faithful, long standing servants and missionaries,

and were not out of line doctrinally but may have some minor philosophy of ministry differences, we were compelled to continue our long ago commitment to them and maintain our support to them. We reasoned that attrition and near future retirement would, in time, help to get us closer to the strategic goals of percentage of support in each category, rather than arbitrarily discontinue support to a missionary to obtain an immediate numerical compliance with our goals (Cullen, 2014: 12).

Calvary Bible Church is a good model for creating and applying a new mission strategy. Over a five year period they were able to make progress in their transition from their previous situation. The elders of CBC approved their new mission strategy in November of 2003. At that time, their monthly support of church planting included five church plants and was at 17.9% of their total mission budget. Their desire was to designate 40% of their mission budget to support “full-time missionaries on the field planting churches” (Calvary, 2003c). By 2008 they were able to increase that amount to 25% of their mission budget, though the number of church plants was down to four.

Church strengthening is an area of CBC’s new mission strategy that saw the most improvement. This is an area that had a goal of utilizing 30% of the mission budget “supporting missionaries and organizations that are training new missionaries, pastors, and church leaders” (Calvary, 2003c). In 2003, only 3.3% of their mission budget went to support one missionary involved in church strengthening. By 2008, five missionaries were being supported at an amount that in total made up 28% of the mission budget.

The evangelistic ministries include “supporting missionaries and para-church organizations that have a strong evangelical ministry caring for the needy” (Calvary, 2003c). In 2003, nine missionaries received 33.8% of the mission budget. By 2008 five of those missionaries or organizations had been transitioned out and five more had been transitioned in, but the financial amount had decreased to 28% of their annual budget.

Support ministries assist “missionaries and organizations that provide the materials and services required by missionaries planting churches and training leaders” (Calvary, 2003c).

In 2003, 29.8% of the mission budget supported nine missionaries in this category. By 2008, the number of missionaries had been reduced to five and their support added up to 20% of the mission budget. It is also noteworthy that the CBC mission budget increased more than 9% between 2003 and 2008 and it increased again by more than 11 % between 2008 and 2012. The total increase in their missionary budget from 2003 to 2012 was 21.97%. This suggests that, when a church mission committee is intentional with their commitment to a biblically based strategy of mission and they successfully share this vision with their congregation, the congregation will share in the desire to increase their giving towards mission work.

New Mission Strategy	2003	2008	2012
Church Planting – Ideally 40%	5 missionaries 17.9%	4 missionaries 25%	3 missionaries 25%
Church Strengthening – Ideally 30%	1 missionary 3.3%	5 missionaries 28%	7 missionaries 26%
Evangelism /social action – Ideally 20%	9 missionaries 33.8%	10 missionaries 28%	11 missionaries 32%
Support Ministries – Ideally 10%	9 missionaries 29.8%	5 missionaries 20%	4 missionaries 17%

Figure 6.2 CBC New Mission Strategy Progress from 2003-2014

It is evident from Figure 6.2 that, though progress was made over a ten year period to decrease the percentage of missionary funds directed to support ministries at Calvary Bible Church (and increase percentages for church strengthening and church planting), reducing the percentage for evangelism/social action had its challenges. There are a number of reasons for this. First, it should be noted that because the general mission budget increased by 21.97%, the actual dollar amount designated for evangelism/social action decreased by almost 2% (1.96%) during the period between 2003 and 2012. Therefore, the church had significantly increased its financial giving towards church planting and church strengthening while decreasing its financial support toward evangelism/social action and support ministries.

Other factors contribute to the reason why it is a challenge for a church to significantly reduce its percentage of giving towards social action missionaries. In the example of Calvary Bible Church, there were simply more members from their congregation who desired to serve as missionaries in the category of evangelism/social action than there were members who desired to be sent out to plant churches. Indeed, Calvary Bible Church has found it difficult to find like-minded missionaries focused on church planting. This is another indication that the trend toward social action in mission is overshadowing a movement of church planting in mission.

6.6 Conclusion

Those concerned about the drift in mission away from traditional prioritism are primarily conservatives. In one sense, they are saying that mission should not be *transformed* into holism. For those who desire to hold on to traditional prioritism, several solutions have been offered. They range from the important issue of hermeneutics, to a unified definition of the gospel, to practical solutions for missionaries. Ultimately, however, the greatest hope for traditional prioritism is in the hands of the church. To the extent that the church recognizes this crisis, and responds, the drift will be reduced.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION, CONTRIBUTION, AND FINAL REMARKS

7.1 Conclusion

The overall purpose of this dissertation was to explore and evaluate the factors (independent variables, e.g., theological education, doctrinal views, presuppositions about evangelism and social action), which have influenced how missionaries deal with the tension between evangelism and social action in their practices in Malawi. Evangelism and social action are two of the main dependent variables that determine outcomes of missionary thinking and practice.

The means for evaluating included 1) a qualitative theological review of missionary positions and how they related to the fulfillment of Matthew 28 and application of Matthew 25, 2) an empirical quantitative survey that was administered to more than 100 missionaries currently serving in Malawi, 3) an empirical qualitative interview that was administered to various focus groups in the United States consisting of seminary students with an interest of missionary work in Malawi.

This issue has teeth. If it is not approached in the right way, some who discuss it might feel its bite as doctrinal territories are sought to be protected. However, if handled with a spirit of humility, and a respect for truth, discussions surrounding gospel proclamation and social action can promote a healthy advancement in thinking and practice for all who care about mission. Key questions are:

1. How can missionaries stay focused on carrying out the Great Commission?
2. What roles do support missionaries have in the effort to carrying out the Great Commission?
3. How does the relationship between evangelism and social action represent itself (i.e. traditional prioritism, restrained holism, revisionist holism)?

4. How can missionaries avoid unbalanced views of mission?
5. What are the roles of churches that are sending missionaries and may not be aware of unbalanced tendencies?

7.2 Contribution to Research

This researcher believes that discoveries from this research have made a contribution to the overall body of research in *missiology* and *practical theology*. The research utilized the framework of established mission models (traditional prioritism, restrained holism, and revisionist holism) to analyze and interpret the practices of missionaries in Malawi. This researcher examined and tested certain mission models in a unique study. It was unique because a study like this has never been done in Malawi, but it was also unique because the researcher had a rare opportunity to interview and survey a sampling frame that was representative of an entire nations' employed missionaries. This study will be of use to future theologians, scholars, or researchers who desire to participate in a similar study in Malawi or a comparative study in any other country.

7.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Although the research from this project is sufficient enough to provide a basic indication of missionary praxis in Malawi, and especially as it relates to traditional prioritism and holistic mission, there are areas where further research is needed. These suggested areas include:

1. To determine whether or not the shift towards holistic ministry is increasing or decreasing in Malawi.
2. To determine the long term effect that holistic mission has on Malawian communities.

3. To determine the health of local churches in Malawi and whether holistic mission helps or hinders church strengthening.
4. To determine the depth of discipleship that takes place among converts of holistic missionaries in relation to the converts of traditional prioritist missionaries.
5. To determine whether churches that send missionaries are aware of the tension between social action and gospel proclamation and how they are responding to it.
6. To conduct a comparative study in another African country to determine if the patterns observed are restricted to Malawi.

7.4 Final Remarks

This researcher believes that most missionaries in Malawi would admit that they have seen many missionary endeavors that use lots of resources, and look spectacular, but do not last long. These “big splash” approaches are not what Africa needs. Malawi needs faithful proclamation of God’s Word that will trickle down over time through a true church that will reach out to address physical needs. In reality, the traditional prioritism model may take a hundred years to gain the attention from the world, while a holistic approach can gain it in a few years. But traditional prioritism has the time to wait for those results. In fact, a recent study revealed that traditional prioritist missionaries who ministered more than a hundred years ago have had a much greater impact on social issues today than anyone dreamed.

Earlier this year, an article discussing the research of Robert D. Woodberry revealed some fascinating details about the impact that Protestant missionaries have had. In his PhD dissertation, Woodbury set out to determine why certain countries had higher literacy rates, economic growth, and democratic freedom than other countries (sometimes neighboring countries). For example, literacy and education in Ghana is much higher than in neighboring Togo. What could be the reason?

The reason was clear: During the colonial era, British missionaries in Ghana had established a whole system of schools and printing presses. But France, the colonial power in Togo, severely restricted missionaries. The French authorities took interest in educating only a small intellectual elite. More than 100 years later, education was still limited in Togo. In Ghana, it was flourishing (Dilley, 2014: 34).

As Woodberry began to reveal his research findings by presenting them at various conferences, he was offered a grant to from the John Templeton Foundation.

Woodberry received half a million dollars from the foundation's Spiritual Capital Project, hired almost 50 research assistants, and set up a huge database project at the University of Texas, where he had taken a position in the sociology department. The team spent years amassing more statistical data and doing more historical analyses, further confirming his theory. With these results and his dissertation research, Woodberry could now support a sweeping claim:

Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations (Dilley, 2014: 34).

Woodberry's research revealed another astonishing fact. The only missionaries that consistently proved to bring about these great social benefits to future generations were "conversionary Protestants." Neither Catholic missionaries nor missionaries financed by the state demonstrated the same consistent results as Protestant missionaries sent out in proclamation ministries to convert peoples from other lands to Christianity. In his own words, Woodberry writes:

In particular, conversionary Protestants (CPs) were a crucial catalyst initiating the development and spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, newspapers, voluntary organizations, most major colonial reforms, and the codification of legal protections for nonwhites in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These innovations fostered conditions that made stable representative democracy more likely—regardless of whether many people converted to Protestantism. Moreover, religious beliefs motivated most of these transformations. In this blunt form, without evidence or nuance, these claims may sound overstated and offensive. Yet the historical and statistical evidence of CPs' influence is strong, and the cost of ignoring CPs in our models is demonstrably high (Woodbury, 2012: 244-245)

According to Woodbury, traditional prioritism in mission has far greater effects even on the social welfare of nations than can be measured in a current generation. How much more should missionaries today maintain traditional prioritism? Holistic mission may appear to have tremendous temporary effects, but what are the long term results? The concern of this researcher is that, in our present generation, churches and missionaries might be mesmerized by “big splash,” photo-friendly ministry and forget about the need to keep the priority of gospel proclamation in Christian mission.

This researcher wants to make it explicit in the closing words of this dissertation that he in no way is saying that there is not a place for mercy and compassion ministry today. He, himself, has been involved with AIDS orphan work and members of his church are currently developing a strategic prison ministry in Lilongwe, Malawi. The passion for traditional prioritism should never be confused with a lack of compassion for those suffering in the world. Rather, his perspective is that all Christians should help to alleviate the suffering of others, but especially and primarily future eternal suffering. This is why traditional prioritism should be the dominant form of mission. There is a place for compassion ministry, but it is within the context of healthy churches that are committed to the priority of proclamation.

After all, people of good will of all religions and no religion can and do address the human need for food, clothing, shelter, health, education, justice and so on. But Christians—and Christians only—can be expected to preach the gospel, win men and women of all nations to Jesus Christ, and establish churches that will worship and witness until Christ returns (Hesselgrave, 2007: 144).

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ANNEXURE A: SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR MISSIONARIES IN MALAWI

Survey Questionnaire for Missionaries Serving in Malawi

1. What is the case number for this specific interview?

2. Which statement best describes your missionary status in Malawi?

☐ I am sent to Malawi from a missionary sending agency in another country.

☐ I am sent to Malawi by a church outside of Malawi and I have no formal association with a missionary sending agency.

☐ I am a self-supporting missionary or "tent-maker" missionary.

☐ I do not consider myself to be a missionary (if "d" is chosen, please do not continue with survey).

3. Are you familiar with the following passage of Scripture?
Matthew 28:18–20 "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. How many years have you been serving as a missionary in Malawi?

☐ Less than 3 years ☐ 3–5 years ☐ 6–9 years ☐ 10 or more years

5. How would you evaluate the spiritual health of local Christian churches in Malawi from 0 to 10 where 10 represents the best possible situation and 0 represents the worst possible situation?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
(Worst) (Best)

6. Using the same scale, where would you say the spiritual health of local Christian churches in Malawi was FIVE YEARS AGO?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
(Worst) (Best)

7. Just your best guess, where would you say the spiritual health of local Christian churches in Malawi will be FIVE YEARS FROM NOW?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
(Worst) (Best)

8. Using the same scale, what would you say the spiritual health is of the church you usually attend in Malawi?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
(Worst) (Best)

Survey Questionnaire for Missionaries Serving in Malawi

9. Please respond with "yes," "no" or "not sure" to the following statements about yourself or your belief:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
A. I am a "born again" Christian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. I am an evangelical Christian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. I am a Pentecostal Christian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. I am a Charismatic Christian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. I believe that the church should baptize infants.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F. I believe that the church should only baptize believers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. How important do you think it is for missionaries to do the following activities in Malawi?

	1. Top priority	2. Very important but lower priority	3. Somewhat important	4. Not too important
A. HIV Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. Evangelism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. Baptism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. Orphan Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. Construction of Facilities to be used for Christian ministry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F. Preaching/teaching the Bible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
G. Agricultural training/ food ministry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
H. Small group discipleship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I. One-on-one discipleship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. What missionary position best describes your role here in Malawi?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Pastor | <input type="radio"/> Agriculture Trainer / Farmer |
| <input type="radio"/> Evangelist | <input type="radio"/> Mercy Minister (Orphan Care, Hunger Relief, etc) |
| <input type="radio"/> Medical Missionary | <input type="radio"/> Bible Teacher |
| <input type="radio"/> Bible Translator | <input type="radio"/> Youth Worker |
| <input type="radio"/> General Educator or School Teacher | <input type="radio"/> Support Staff (Maintenance, Construction, Cooking, etc) |

Other

Survey Questionnaire for Missionaries Serving in Malawi

12. In your opinion, how much influence do Christian preachers and missionaries from outside Malawi have within the country of Malawi?

- ☐ A great deal ☐ Not too much
☐ Some ☐ None at all

Other (please specify)

13. Regarding your answer to the previous question, do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing for Malawi?

- ☐ Good thing ☐ Bad thing

Other (please specify)

14. Which statement best describes your church involvement here in Malawi?

- ☐ I generally attend the same church each week here in Malawi.
☐ My ministry responsibilities require me to visit several churches in Malawi each month, therefore I am usually unable to attend the same church each week.
☐ For other reasons, I have not yet committed myself to attend the same church each week here in Malawi.

15. If you answered "a" or "b" to the previous question, what church (or group of churches) do you regularly attend?

16. How influential is the Great Commission passage of Matthew 28:18-20 to your work here in Malawi?

- ☐ Extremely Influential – it is the reason I am in Malawi. ☐ Somewhat Influential – I appreciate the directives but haven't thought much about how they relate to my ministry.
☐ Very Influential – I have been motivated by its directives. ☐ Not very influential – I would be doing the same thing here in Malawi whether I was familiar with this passage or not.

17. What best describes your involvement with Baptism in Malawi?

- ☐ I baptize people regularly. ☐ I occasionally encourage people to be baptized.
☐ I occasionally baptize people. ☐ I am not typically involved with baptism in Malawi.
☐ I often encourage people to be baptized.

18. What best describes your involvement with Teaching the Bible in Malawi?

- ☐ I teach the Bible regularly. ☐ I occasionally encourage people to be taught by those who teach the Bible.
☐ I occasionally teach the Bible. ☐ I am not typically involved Bible teaching in Malawi.
☐ I often encourage people to be taught by those who teach the Bible.

Survey Questionnaire for Missionaries Serving in Malawi

19. In an average 7-day week, how many hours do you spend doing the following activities?

	50 minutes or less per week	1 - 2 hours per week	3 - 5 hours per week	5 - 10 hours per week	10 - 20 hours per week	more than 20 hours per week
A. Personal Needs (banking, shopping, cooking, paying bills, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. Traveling (to and from work, visiting sites, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. Ministering to physical needs (hospital work, orphan care, agricultural work, or other acts of mercy)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. Language study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. Preparation and study to teach or preach the Bible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F. Personal Prayer and Bible Study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
G. Administrative work (organizing events, office work, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
H. Worship Events or Fellowship Events with other believers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I. Sleep	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
J. Rest or Leisure time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Which statement best describes your practice with new believers and baptism?

- ☐ I encourage new believers to be baptized in a local church in Malawi.
- ☐ I encourage new believers to be baptized (and no church association is necessary).
- ☐ I don't usually encourage new believers to be baptized.

21. Please estimate how many new believers you have encouraged to be baptized over the past two years here in Malawi:

- ☐ None ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-9 ☐ 10-20 ☐ More than 20

22. Which of the following best describes your involvement with discipleship?

- ☐ I encourage new believers to be disciplined in a local church here in Malawi.
- ☐ I encourage new believers to be disciplined through an individual or an organization (and no church association is necessary).
- ☐ I don't usually encourage new believers to be disciplined.

Survey Questionnaire for Missionaries Serving in Malawi

23. Not including your own family members, choose the statement or statements below that describe your role with discipleship in Malawi? (more than one answer is possible)

- ☐ I am currently discipling an Individual.
- ☐ I am currently discipling 2-6 people in a small group setting.
- ☐ I am currently discipling a group of more than 6 people in a group setting.
- ☐ I am not currently discipling anyone in Malawi.

24. In your view, how important are the following activities for someone who desires to disciple someone else.

	1. Top priority	2. Very important but lower priority	3. Somewhat important	4. Not too important
Fellowship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bible study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating only vegetables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Baptism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting up early	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sharing a meal together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. In your view, how important is each of the following for being a good evangelical Christian?

	1. Essential	2. Important but not essential	3. Not too important	4. Not important at all
A. Working to help the poor and needy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B. Taking a public stand on social and political issues when they conflict with moral and biblical principles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C. Working to protect the natural environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D. Taking a public stand on social and political issues that could limit the freedom of evangelicals to practice their faith	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E. Working to lead others to Christ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F. Following the teachings of Christ in one's personal and family life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
G. Tithing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
H. Baptism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I. Discipleship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Survey Questionnaire for Missionaries Serving in Malawi

26. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you participate in religious services?

- ☐ More than once a week
 ☐ A few times a year
☐ Once a week
 ☐ Seldom
☐ Once or twice a month
 ☐ Never

27. Generally speaking, how often, if ever, do you do each of the following?

- | | At least once a week | Once or twice a month | Several times a year | Seldom | never |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Participate in prayer groups, Scripture study groups or religious education programs | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| B. Share your faith or views on God with people from other religions | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

28. Please describe the weekly activities that occupy most of your ministry time as a missionary in Malawi? (a few words)

29. Which statement best describes your financial support as a missionary.

- ☐ The bulk of my financial support comes from individuals, churches, foundations, or non-profit organizations based outside of Malawi.
☐ I am self-supporting.
☐ I am supported by a non-governmental organization that is based in Malawi.
☐ Other (please specify)

30. What is your current age?

- ☐ A. 18-29
 ☐ D. 50-59
☐ B. 30-39
 ☐ E. 60 years and older
☐ C. 40-49

31. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
 ☐ Male

32. Are you now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married?

- ☐ Married
 ☐ Separated
☐ Widowed
 ☐ Never married
☐ Divorced

33. If you are married, is your spouse also a missionary?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No
 ☐ Not Applicable

Survey Questionnaire for Missionaries Serving in Malawi

34. How many children, by age, are currently live in your household?

Less than 1 year old	<input type="text"/>
1 to 10 years old	<input type="text"/>
11 to 17 years old	<input type="text"/>
18 years old or older	<input type="text"/>

35. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Graduated from high school
 ☐ Some graduate school
☐ Some college
 ☐ Completed graduate school
☐ Graduated from college

Other (please specify)

36. What kind of theological training have you received? (More than one answer is possible)

- ☐ None
☐ Independent, self-guided correspondence studies
☐ Informal training from a pastor or church leader
☐ Formal training at the following Bible school, college, or seminary:

Name of Bible school, college, or seminary

37. In which city or town in Malawi do you live?

38. What region of Malawi do you live in?

- ☐ Southern
 ☐ Central
 ☐ Northern

39. What is the name of your home country?

40. Please identify the continent of your home country:

- ☐ North America
 ☐ Europe
 ☐ Asia
☐ South America
 ☐ Africa
 ☐ Australia

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Please introduce yourselves and tell me what church you are from and what you would like to do when you graduate from seminary.

When you think about missionary work, is there a particular passage that sticks out in your mind?

Are you familiar with Matthew 28:19-20? Is there anyone who is not familiar with it?

Thinking about Matthew 28:19-20, what is the main emphasis of that text? What is it telling us to do, or telling the church to do, or what is Jesus telling his disciples to do?

How do you make disciples?

What is your home church? What are the primary activities of missionaries that your church supports? What do missionaries do, actually on the ground?

What do you believe should be the primary activity of a missionary?

Do any of you support individual missionaries (other than in your general giving)? If so, what are the missionaries doing that you support?

Do you all believe that the church should be involved in social action?

Could you define what a missionary is?

Suppose that your church supported a school teacher to go to a place like Malawi to share the love of Christ by teaching school children things like math, English, and science. Let's say that another person from your church decided to go on his own to the same school in Malawi and he was hired by that school to teach the same subjects – but he did not receive any support from your church – would you consider that both of the teachers are indeed missionaries?

If there is a pendulum in missions that swings back and forth between social action and gospel proclamation (through a teaching/baptism type ministry), what should the

balance between the two? Should there be a priority? If so, how should we determine that?

Many Christians would agree that social action should be practiced among one another within the church. Is there a place for social action to poorer communities outside of the church? Is that a responsibility of the church?

Is there a passage that anyone here can think of that instructs believers to minister to the physical needs of those outside of the church?

Do you think there is a difference today in the primary activities of missionaries today than that of missionaries 40-50 years ago?

Can you define the word “missional?”

Do you think that churches today should support a missionary who is spending 90-100 percent of his/her time in social action?

Would everyone here agree that in your lifetime you have seen a trend in mission work that moves from less social action towards more social actions? If so, why do you think that that is?

If there has been a trend where the pendulum in mission work is swinging more towards social action, is that something that we should be concerned about? How should we approach this issue?

Has anyone here heard of the Student Volunteer Movement?

ANNEXURE C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM - SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TOPIC: Missionary Practices in Malawi: What Missionaries are doing in Malawi to help fulfill the Great Commission

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Brian Biedebach, a PhD student from the Faculty of Theology (Missiology Dept.) at Stellenbosch University. Results from this study will be contributed to a PhD dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently a missionary in Malawi or because you are a church leader that supports a missionary in Malawi.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The overall purpose of this study is to discover the current practices of protestant missionaries in Malawi. A key question is: What are missionaries doing in Malawi to help fulfill the Great Commission according to their understanding of Matthew 28:18-20?

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Allow the investigator to ask you questions revolving around the subjects of Missionary work and the Great Commission.

Allow the investigator to analyze and document your answers.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Because your name and ministry name will remain anonymous, there are no potential risks or discomforts that are foreseen from conducting this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research project is intended to benefit church leaders and missionaries who desire to have a greater understanding of what missionaries are doing in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You are asked to complete this survey or interview on a volunteer basis. No financial payment will be given for your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained according to the standard ethical procedures carried out by the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch. In addition, the researcher will keep all of the research data securely stored and password protected on his computer. The investigator will destroy all participant data at the completion of the dissertation.

If you are audio recorded for this interview, you have the right to review and/or edit the recording. Only the researcher will have access to the recording and when the PhD dissertation is complete, all audio recordings will be deleted.

All subjects interviewed and all personal information of those who participate in the surveys will be kept anonymous in the dissertation.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Brian Biedebach (Principal Investigator) at P.O. Box 1028, Lilongwe Malawi / Phone: +265 8 211-050 / Email: bdbach@gmail.com; and Dr. Xolile Simon at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch, SA / Phone: +27 21-808-3636 / Email: dsimon@sun.ac.za

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by _____ in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [*Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other*] and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into* _____ by _____].

Signature of Investigator

Date

ANNEXURE D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM – FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TOPIC: Missionary Practices in Malawi: What Missionaries are doing in Malawi to help fulfill the Great Commission

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Brian Biedebach, a PhD student from the Faculty of Theology (Missiology Dept.) at Stellenbosch University. Results from this study will be contributed to a PhD dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a professing Christian in the United States with an interest in missionary work in Malawi.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The overall purpose of this study is to discover the current practices of protestant missionaries in Malawi. A key question is: What are missionaries doing in Malawi to help fulfill the Great Commission according to their understanding of Matthew 28:18-20?

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Participate in a focus group discussion involving the subjects of Missionary work and the Great Commission.

Allow the investigator to record, analyze and document your answers.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Because your name and ministry name will remain anonymous, there are no potential risks or discomforts that are foreseen from conducting this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research project is intended to benefit church leaders and missionaries who desire to have a greater understanding of what missionaries are doing in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You are asked to complete this survey or interview on a volunteer basis. No financial payment will be given for your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained according to the standard ethical procedures carried out by the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch. In addition, the researcher will keep all of the research data securely stored and password protected on his computer. The investigator will destroy all participant data at the completion of the dissertation.

If you are audio recorded for this interview, you have the right to review and/or edit the recording. Only the researcher will have access to the recording and when the PhD dissertation is complete, all audio recordings will be deleted.

All subjects interviewed and all personal information of those who participate in the surveys will be kept anonymous in the dissertation.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Brian Biedebach (Principal Investigator) at P.O. Box 1028, Lilongwe Malawi / Phone: +265 8 211-050 / Email: bdbach@gmail.com; and Dr. Xolile Simon at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch, SA / Phone: +27 21-808-3636 / Email: dsimon@sun.ac.za

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me by _____ in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in *English* and *no translator was used*.

Signature of Investigator

Date

ANNEXURE E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH



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Approval Notice
New Application
17-Jun-2014
Biedebach, Brian B
Victoria Street
Stellenbosch
Stellenbosch, WC

Proposal #: DESC/Biedebach/Sept2012/7

Title: Making disciples in current missionary practice in Malawi? An empirical - theological study of religious workers

Dear Dr Brian Biedebach,

Your New Application received on , was reviewed by members of the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on **18-Sep-2012** and was approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **18-Sep-2012 -17-Sep-2013**

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number (DESC/Biedebach/Sept2012/7)** on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0218089183.

Sincerely,

Clarissa GRAHAM
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

Investigator Responsibilities Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2. Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use. If you need to recruit more participants than was noted in your REC approval letter, you must submit an amendment requesting an increase in the number of participants.

3. Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4. Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the continuing review report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5. Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, number of participants,

participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouch within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8. Provision of Counseling or emergency support. When a dedicated counselor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions, interventions or data analysis) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

ANNEXURE F: REQUEST LETTER TO MALAWI IMMIGRATION

From: Dr. Brian Biedebach
P.O. Box 1028
Lilongwe, Malawi

To: The Chief Immigration Officer
Immigration Headquarters
P.O. Box 331
Blantyre, Malawi

Date: August 15, 2012

Re: Request for assistance with research in Malawi

Dear Sir,

Since 2007, I have been a Professor of Biblical Studies at African Bible College in Lilongwe and currently I am working on a second doctorate at Stellenbosch University in Cape Town, South Africa. Part of my PhD dissertation involves a survey of Protestant Missionaries in Malawi to determine what they are actually doing in Malawi. How is the church in Malawi and how are citizens of Malawi benefitting from foreign missionaries? This is a question I hope to answer through this research. This research may also benefit the Malawian government as well as future researchers of missionary involvement in Malawi.

In order to have the most accurate statistical results in this survey, it will be best if a random selection from all protestant missionaries in Malawi can be surveyed. I have been in correspondence with your Permit Officer, Fletcher Nyirenda, and he has referred me to you for approval.

If you are able to assist, the process would look something like this:

Mr. Nyirenda could supply a list of the names of all protestant religious workers currently holding T.E.P.'s and P.R.P.'s in Malawi.

I would input the names into a computer that would randomly select some of them for a "voluntary survey."

I would contact those missionaries who are randomly selected (with assistance from Students from African Bible College) and ask them to volunteer to complete a survey.

Survey information would remain completely anonymous.

All participant data will be kept in password protected computer files during the research period.

When the research project is complete, I will delete all participant data from my records.

These standards are consistent with the requirements from Stellenbosch University. My request is that you would give Mr. Nyirenda permission to assist me with this research project.

Thank you for your service,

Dr. Brian Biedebach

ANNEXURE G: APPROVAL FROM CHIEF IMMIGRATION OFFICER

From: Fletcher Nyirenda
Sent: Friday, August 17, 2012 11:57 AM
To: Brian Biedebach
Subject: Re: Letter for Chief Immigration Officer

Hello Dr,

The approval has been gotten. You can therefore make arrangements to meet me.

Kind Regards,

Fletcher T. Nyirenda (Immigration Officer),
Immigration Headquarters,
P.O. Box 331,
Blantyre,
Malawi.

ANNEXURE H: APPLICATION FORM FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Application for University Research Interviewer

Name: _____ Date: _____

Gender: Male / Female Age: _____

Cell Number: _____ Alternate Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Address: _____

What is your home village? _____

What Region is that in? (Circle one) Southern Central Northern

Do you have friends or relatives that you could stay with if you traveled to Blantyre?

Do you have friends or relatives that you could stay with if you traveled to Mzuzu?

What is your major? _____

What extra-curricular activities are you involved in (Sports, music, etc.) _____

What Church do you attend regularly? _____

Do you have a part-time or full-time job at the moment? _____

If yes, what is your job? _____

How many hours per week do you currently work? _____

How many hours are you studying or in class each week? _____

Are you available to travel on the weekends? _____

Do you have your own computer? _____

Are you computer literate? _____

ANNEXURE I: SAMPLE INTERVIEW OF FOCUS GROUP

---Start---

INTERVIEWER - Okay so, I'm here with P1, and P2, and P3, and P4, and P5, and P6 and this is the second focus group and I have a series of questions here I've planned for these guys and I've explained the waivers to you guys, and you guys have all signed it and are all good for that right?

INTERVIEWER- Okay so, I'm gonna be the moderator here in this discussion. I would like to ask you guys, first of all to introduce yourselves and tell me what you'd like to do when you graduate from the Master's Seminary.

B1 - I would like to go onto PhD studies hopefully in Europe.

B2 - I'm looking to become an associate pastor or senior Pastor and then Army Chaplain down the road.

B3 - I'm looking at a local and foreign church planting.

B4 - I'm looking to be an associate Pastor back in Northern California on graduation day.

B5 - I'm looking to become a Senior Pastor but I don't exactly know what location.

B6 - I would like to go back to Kingsburg where I came from and be an associate pastor there.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, great. These questions are just, you can all answer or summarize – you don't have to answer with each one, I just want to generate some discussion here—When you think about missionary work, is there a particular passage of Scripture that sticks out in your mind?

INTERVIEWER- Yes?

B4 - The Great Commission where Jesus says “ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”- the all nations part comes very naturally with missions when we think of that because it encompasses going throughout the world and making disciples.

B1 - In addition to the Great Commission, I also think of Paul's desire in Romans to go and preach the gospel that has not yet been preached.

INTERVIEWER- Any others?

B2 - I'm [B2]. I think there's a passage in Mark, I think it's in chapter 10, I might have to look it up -- but to go into the world and preach the gospel

B5 - I think there's a passage that talks about it in 3 John where they support men who are fellow workers in the truth, who are going out as missionaries and there's kinda this idea of how you support as a church to those men who actually go out for the sake of Christ.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, is everyone here familiar with Matthew 28:19-20? Is there anyone here who's not familiar with it? Everyone's familiar?

ENTIRE FOCUS GROUP – Yes.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, thinking about Matthew 28:19-20 what's the main emphasis of that text? What is it telling us to do, or telling the church to do, or what is Jesus telling His disciples to do?

INTERVIEWER- Yes?

B3 - Growing up I was understood that it was going, but the realization that it is making disciples, and three participles that follow, which would be: baptizing and teaching, actually going there, being a participle that is all encompassing of what it means to make disciples.

INTERVIEWER- Anyone else want to add anything to that?

B5 - That's the way I would've thought too and that's how I was going for a long time, because it was taught that way to me, but after learning under a few other guys and learning the original language there, the participle is 'going' and the primary verb is 'making disciples.' So, it involves not just evangelistic messages, but it involves the building up of the church across the entire globe, as it is referring to.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, and how do you make disciples?

B6 - I would follow up on that and say the text here with the participle use shows us that to make disciples it involves going, baptizing, and then of course teaching them all the things that Christ had commanded His disciples. And through the inspiration of the New Testament and Holy Spirit – those things that Christ brought back to remembrance to the disciples that they've recorded in the New Testament, and those are the body of content we are to teach new believers in Christ.

INTERVIEWER- Anybody else want to talk about disciple making or what's involved with that?

B4 - You make disciples by passing on what you know, by replicating a body of knowledge, or a life. 2 Timothy 2:2-4 is probably a good text for discipleship. "What you have heard from me, in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to thank the men who will be able to teach others." So it's just a multiplication of entrusting a body of knowledge or a life to multiply.

B1 - Also, in addition really, alongside with the teaching there, is Scripture that's modeling of how to obey the word taught, and how to obey the things that you're teaching. For example, when Paul is passing it on to Timothy, he tells him to emulate not only what he taught, but also the way he lived out what he taught. So this disciple making has to do with the teaching of the truth under Scripture, and also modeling in your life how it is lived out.

B5 - I think of the example that Paul has in Acts 20 when he talks to the Ephesian church, and how he was with them night and day for a period of three years, teaching one another from house to house and how he did not cease to acknowledge each one with tears. I think those are verses 31, and verse 20 I think he talks about that. And he lived with them, and walked through life with them, and ministered God's word to them on a daily basis.

INTERVIEWER- Okay. You guys all attend churches that support missionaries, yes?

ENTIRE FOCUS GROUP - Yes

INTERVIEWER- Okay, and what are the primary activities of missionaries that your churches support? What do missionaries do actually on the ground that you have in mind when you think of missionaries from your home churches and maybe you can just go around and tell me where you think, where you consider your own church to be. And then maybe just each one of you can briefly tell me what missionaries are doing, when you think of missionaries, what are the activities that they are involved in.

B1 - My home church is Community Christian Alliance Church in Northridge, CA. We have several missionaries around the world mostly involved in just the direct proclamation of the gospel. Some, because of the nature of the country that they're in are also involved in business around there so they can support themselves to an extent.

B2 - My home church is Grace Community Church. To my knowledge, our missionaries are primarily involved in pastoral ministry and training church leaders.

B3 - I'll speak to my home church back in North Carolina. The primary involvement there is for church planting, through home discipleship, and just planting new local churches once the area or space becomes too small.

B4 - My home church in Sacramento is Chinese Grace Bible Church. The missionaries that my church supports are all across the board. One works in Christian radio in Ecuador, others do community work in China, others are doctors in Pakistan. Others teach English in China; all different kinds of things.

B5 - My home church is Grace Community Church in Sun Valley. And it's kind of what [B2] was saying. It's pretty broad, and there are a lot of missionaries that we support. But a lot of it is through training leaders in the churches, building up churches that are in the area, ministering the gospel to areas that don't have a lot of good strong churches in those churches.

B6 - My home church in Kingsburg supports three missionaries. One of them is in Italy and he is primarily doing pastoral ministry. One is in Uganda, and his ministry is sufficiency of Scripture, which I believe is to train men to study and preach the Bible. And then we have a missionary here in L.A who is dean for the Expositors' Institute, which trains Spanish speakers for pastoral ministry and preaching.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, I've gotten a lot of comments about different activities that missionaries are doing. I've heard things like teaching, doctors, and things like that. Other people have described missionaries as doing translation work, or drilling wells, or so forth – all kinds of things. What do you believe should be the primary activity of a missionary?

B5 - I think of going back to the 3 John passage, they went out for the sake of the name, and so at least in the book of Acts, or at least in the New Testament – what it was a ministry to make disciples and to spread the word of God to help people become obedient to the truth. So it's a ministry of truth, so that's why there's a lot of teachers involved, but it's also a living among them and abiding with them, so they can help grow them to become more like Jesus Christ wherever they live or whatever areas of life they're in.

B2 - I think if the heart of a missionary's job, so to speak, is 'make disciples' and we make disciples by spreading the word of God, and if a missionary is stationed in an area where there is no Bible and there is no word, then perhaps the main emphasis should be Bible translation – getting the Word of God into the hands of the people. I think of a missionary that our church supports, and he's helping the people establish their own alphabet and their own language so that they can read the word of God. But then in other countries where everyone's literate, and they have access to a Bible, the

emphasis may shift a little to evangelism and pastoral ministry. Perhaps it's an area where there are churches, they just don't have leaders to take charge of those churches, then perhaps leadership training should be the emphasis. So I think it might depend on the location and the needs of the people.

B1 – I think the primary emphasis of a missionary should be making disciples through evangelism for those who don't believe, and for those who have come to believe through training. Then all these other things such as translation, or various forms of training fall under that because translation allows for the training, or building things for that- allows them to meet or whatnot. But the primary purpose is making disciples through evangelism and teaching the word.

B5 - I'd add to, I think of Colossians 1:28 where Paul says that we, we present; our goal is to present every man completely in Christ and that he labors and strives for that. He's talking to a church that he was currently a missionary to. So, I think as, if you were to kind of summarize that one goal, if you could do that, it could be summarized in those words in that statement.

INTERVIEWER- Do any of you support individual missionaries other than through your general giving at your church, where you've sort of "adopted a missionary" and if so, what are the missionaries doing that you support?

B4 - We support the [Missionary family in Malawi], who go through Grace Community Church, and they're allowing, or involved in the local church there as well as teaching, I believe its training pastors, and starting up a seminary so it's the beginning stages of that.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, anyone else?

INTERVIEWER- Okay, I'm hearing comments about teaching and I'm hearing comments about social action. So, I'm hearing comments about social actions and social work, like doctors and social work. And I'm also hearing a lot about gospel proclamation type of work. Do you believe that the church should be involved in social action?

B3 - I think the book of James really helps us to be involved with the poor and the widows and that way we display the gospel that we have been entrusted with. But I do think we must be a speaking people. That is our primary emphasis, to actually speak the gospel to people. But as far as social action, that is a demonstration of the change that the gospel does bring.

B2 - I do strongly believe that the church should be primarily – because Jesus said “you are the light of the world,” and you cannot function as that light unless you’re being seen.

INTERVIEWER- You think that the church should be primarily what?

B2 - Um, I think that the church can use social interaction as a means to ministering to people without Christ.

B6 - I think it’s both. I don’t think that you could separate the two. It is primarily word ministry because there’s no way for someone to know the gospel apart from it being preached. So, word ministry is primary. But if we truly believe what we’re preaching then the good deeds are going to follow from that.

B1- I talked to James also. Genuine faith shows itself in caring for those around you, those who are in need especially and it isn’t something that replaces the proclamation, it goes alongside it and confirms it. Because if you say you believe these things, but you don’t help, you don’t care, you don’t love, it shows that you aren’t really changed by this passage.

INTERVIEWER- Yes?

B4 - Give you a good example, we find in the Bible in Galatians 2:10 when Paul is accepted by the apostles and they tell him they can go and share the gospel, “only they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.” I think that’s a very good text to see preaching the gospel, but it’s also very important to remember those who are in need also.

B6 - One more passage from Galatians 6:10, “So then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially those who are in the household of faith.” So, our good deeds should not just be to the people in the church, but also to everybody. But there is that emphasis on those in the church as well.

B5 - A note on that, it’s interesting how on that Galatians passage how it’s kind of a by-product of the actual goal of his ministry. So the goal of his ministry, was what he was doing for the sake of the gospel, because I think the underlying assumption is that the souls of the people he’s ministering to are of the greatest importance, and then secondarily, don’t forget that these are real people who have needs in this world, and that God cares about those things. So I think it’s necessary or else you’re disconnecting yourself from the reality of people. But at the same time it’s not the end of all things. There are passages like Matthew 6 where it talks about how God is the one who really provides for the people in need. In life, He’s the one that clothes the

grass of the fields and the flowers, but we can still be a part of that work in people's lives and their physical needs that they have.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, could you define what a missionary is? We've been talking about missionaries and missions but can you give me a basic definition of what a missionary is?

B4 - A missionary is someone who's on a mission, so yes, a task to do, and he's sent. So, that makes him different than someone who is at the home base or wherever the senders are. He's being sent, and he has a mission. So within a Christian context, a missionary is a Christian who is sent to disciple and make disciples somewhere different from where the senders are.

INTERVIEWER- Anyone else?

B6 - I would just build on [B4]'s definition and maybe I would clarify and say not just going somewhere where the senders aren't, but somewhere where the gospel is not strongly established. You could go somewhere where the senders aren't but the gospel is already established there. But, [B4] could disagree with me on that. (laughter) But I wanted to his good definition and modify it for myself.

INTERVIEWER- So if there are already strong believers in one area then a person wouldn't be considered a missionary?

B6 - Yeah, I'm trying to figure that out right now. I don't know.... Well, I think of, I guess in my mind I think of 'hold tight' type missions and Timothy type. Paul said that he wanted to go where the gospel was not already there, and then he left Timothy in Ephesus where Timothy, I guess you could say was a missionary, but Paul had already reached that city with the gospel, so...

B5 - I don't know— [B1] would know better than I would but, I don't know if the missionary term has any direct Greek equivalent. But I think the closest, and I keep coming back to this passage, not to be redundant- but in that 3 John passage, he talks about them as 'those who went out', and so I think that would be a pretty apt way to describe what a missionary is. They go out, because there's a need that needs to be addressed somewhere else. They're the kind of people who are content not to be at home, where they have always lived. But there's a need to spread and to make the gospel be a part of the result of the gospel going forth. And it's pictured I think well in Acts 1 where he talks about going from Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. So, I think it just has that idea of going out. There's a setting out, and they can dwell for a period of time like Paul did in the book of Acts but they can also, there's a mission to go from one place to another because there are needs that need to be addressed.

INTERVIEWER- Suppose that your church supported a schoolteacher to go to a place like Malawi for example, to share the love of Christ by teaching school children things like math, English, and science. Ok? Now let's say that another person from your church also decided to go to Malawi, and went to the same school and the school hired them by giving them a salary to teach the same subject that the person that your church is supporting, but he doesn't receive support from your church even though he's from that church originally. Would you consider that both of the teachers are indeed missionaries?

B1 - I would say if both of them are there for the primary purpose of making disciples, of spreading the gospel, I would say that they are both missionaries because if our definitions hold, then it isn't what matters, whether you receive a constant support from the churches, but whether or not you're there to make disciples. Paul many times, didn't receive from the churches that he left; he ended up receiving from the churches that he went to. So it doesn't make or break whether or not you're a missionary if you're receiving money from a church I would say.

B5- It's kind of a tricky question I guess, because I think it has to do with God's view of that person and that point, and man's perception of what they're doing. I mean, I think both can be viewed as missionaries. Some people would say that they would be, some would say that they're not... and it just depends if one is and one's not. It depends on why they're there and whether they're really fulfilling the work of a missionary. And it would kind of go back to what B1 already said, if they're really staying to the task of what they've been called to do; they went out for the sake of the name, so are they doing that work? That goes more than just their being supported by the church financially. I don't think that defines a person as God's kind of missionary; that might be man's kind of missionary. But I don't think that's one that God would honor. So I think there's gotta be some kind of effect—I think there is something to be said for the fact that a church has acknowledged this certain person as their 'sent out one', so I think there has to be some kind of connection to a local body in the church, but if someone is just a person that's going there and teaching and they weren't sent out by that church necessarily then it's kind of a relative term: it's not a negative or positive thing, they're just not that church's missionary. But if they're both fulfilling the work of the gospel, honestly I don't believe it really matters at that point because missionary or not missionary it's not the emphasis in the New Testament. It's the issue that there was a need that needed to be met and they addressed it.

B2 - Are these both men sent and accountable to the same church?

INTERVIEWER - One went on his own, and the other was sent out from his church.

B2 - Then no, they're not both missionaries because that way if we understand missionaries, a missionary is someone who was sent from a local church and held accountable to that church with a specific mission. If that's the case, anybody who says "I want to be a missionary" can go anywhere they want, and just assign a title to themselves.

INTERVIEWER- Just for sake of argument, don't all Christians have a mission? Aren't all Christians supposed to make disciples? Is the term missionary synonymous with Christian?

B1 - I have actually thought about this before, and the term missionary is a very modern term, and we use it in distinction in evangelism for someone who crosses the cultural border, or national border, whereas evangelism is in your same cultural context or a close context. But fundamentally, I would say that you're fulfilling the same commission whether or not you go, or not, doesn't change the fact that you're responsible to make disciples. Just the term missionary seems to be a quasi-technical label for people who go, is how I would tend to describe it.

INTERVIEWER- Anyone else? Is everybody a missionary?

B5 - Yeah, that's interesting. It's difficult because when we talk about making disciples in Matthew 20 and 28 and just trying to stay close to what Jesus is talking about there, making disciples does have the participles of "baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you" and not everyone is able to fulfill those specific requirements. Does that mean that not everyone is involved in the process of making disciples? No. But it also means, that mandate does have a specific, it's almost like there is a specific calling for those who specifically go out and make disciples and be a part of that process. And that isn't limiting too much, but at the same time there is a kind of a job or association that's unique in that way. So to define whether every Christian would be that kind of a missionary, I don't think that's that necessarily a New Testament idea in the sense that, most of what the New Testament requires from believers is that they minister to each other in the body of Christ and present a great picture of God's work in the church and what He's building. And so, it is a testimony of their life, and the way that it overflows in the unbelieving community around them, but it is kind of, I think it's too big of a generalization to say that everyone is a missionary in the same sense as the Great Commission. But people can disagree and that would be probably be a good thing too.

B3 - I would agree that our difficulty as [B1] said is with the term missionary because it is so new to our culture in a broad spectrum in church history. Just looking at Acts 13, it's very obvious of the five teachers who are in the church of Antioch, and only Paul and Barnabas are actually separated out, and that is a process that is done by the

Holy Spirit from the local congregation and then they are sent off to unreached peoples. So in a general sense I would agree, but some, all Christians in a general sense, are missionaries in that we display and take God's mission to unreached peoples; whether that be in our local communities or around the world. But in a church sense, I would say that certain missionaries, whether financially supported or not, are the ones that the Holy Spirit separates out to send to those unreached people groups.

INTERVIEWER- Okay. If there's a pendulum in missions that swings back and forth between social action and gospel proclamation, through baptism and evangelism teaching, that kind of ministry, what should be the balance between the two? Should there be a priority? If so, how would we determine that?

INTERVIEWER- This is fun, huh?

B2 - The best thing I can think about without thinking too long about it, is keeping the right perspective. If a medical missionary is going under the cover of medicine, well, is he constantly building up relationships in order that he may make disciples? Because fixing someone's broken leg doesn't make disciples. But it's, like I said, it's a means where he can earn the right to share the truth. Or a guy going to China where missionaries aren't welcomed. Well, if the guy goes over there just to teach, and he loses perspective as to why he's doing that, then always concerned about his empty dead works that don't save. So, with someone who is very new to this mission minded ecclesiology, it seems like the perspective of remembering why I'm here, and never losing that focus seems to be something that helps the balance.

INTERVIEWER- Many Christians would agree that social action should be practiced among one another within the church. Is there a place for social action to pour communities outside of the church? Is that a responsibility of the church? We've talked about some of that before, but just asking that again.

B3 - I was gonna say what [B5] said earlier, the command in Galatians chapter 6 , "give it to ALL, to everyone" and then it does say, especially for those in the church, that helps us know that the all includes those who are outside of the church. And so it is part of our task to do good to everyone we come in contact with, not just the church. Even though our priority is there.

INTERVIEWER- Are there any other passages you can think of that would instruct believers to minister to physical needs to those outside of the church?

B6 - I would want to do more study on this, but I think I just read the command to love your neighbor is actually a command to love those outside of the church, I think. I don't know how black and white you can make that but the commands to love one

another would be the command to love those in the body, and love your neighbor would be outside the body.

B3 - There's a phrase in Acts 2:47 with the early church that talks about them praising God and having favor with all the people. Context seems to indicate that's all the people in Jerusalem at the time, whether a part of the church or outside of the church. So I don't know if I could definitively use that as a paradigm to say that all churches should follow that paradigm. It is a summary passage but in the same regard it seems that the people looking into the church of Jerusalem noticed that the actions that are taking place in Acts 2:42-47 had some impact to where they began to listen to the gospel message because of the social interaction and maybe even good deeds that were done, where they're selling their possessions or giving to the poor and things of that nature.

INTERVIEWER- OK, suppose you were to walk into a church foyer and in the foyer there would be a map of the world and America would be right in the middle, assuming you were in an American church, and there were thumbtacks in the city that the church was in (and of course it would be the biggest thumbtack on the map) and around the map there are lots of other pins or thumbtacks of pictures of missionaries in various places around the world, and suppose above the map is the verse written Matthew 28:19-20 and the words "Go and tell all the world and make disciples." The question is if that map were in the church 40 or 50 years ago, what would be the primary activity of those represented in the pictures? How does that compare to those represented in the pictures if you were to walk into the same church today, do you think there's a difference today in the primary activity of missionaries than that of missionaries 40 or 50 years ago?

INTERVIEWER- Is that clear?

B6 - It's clear, I just don't have a 40 or 50 year memory

ENTIRE FOCUS GROUP- (laughter)

B2 - I guess I speak for all of us when we say we just don't have knowledge of that era of American church history because I'm 28 and I'm a first generation Christian and I didn't become a believer until I was 22. So just hearing some sermons and just a few books that have referenced missions 50 years ago, all I can do is speculate. And that's dangerous.

INTERVIEWER- Okay.

B5 - One thing that would be different is technology and I think there would be some different methods if the purpose is still the same at least in both eras. Some of that

would be due to the fact that people can communicate through a phone a lot easier, the Internet a lot easier... I think it would be easier for missionaries to adopt a more distant approach, then to actually be in the community or with the people. I think of going back 50 years, we're talking about like, the Jim Elliot era, and the adopted a place where no one had even broken through to that region in a physical way who had already lived in that area, and they had to land in their plane and get out and work with the people and in the process get killed by those people. So I think that it's easier in today's culture to be more distant, it's not that it's necessarily happening that way, but it's not as connected with the people on their land with and interpersonally. I would think that would be something that knowing the trend, it would probably be that some missionaries are less inclined to do that. That's what comes off the top of my head.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, can anyone here define the word missional?

B5 - Is that a word? Not that in that sense, I'm sure it is. But what does that even mean?

B2 - From what I've seen, from other ministries it seems like it's a current trend or whatever, whatever it is, it's the idea, the mindset that we need to reach out to the cultural to win them. If I'm anywhere in the ballpark it has a very cultural focus.

B1- I think it's used several different ways. One is the cultural focus, another way of using it, which is more the way people I've familiar with use it, which is just living with intention to try and carry out the Great Commission in life. Not in the sense of going somewhere far, but going somewhere far but where you are in the moment and seeing that as an opportunity to evangelize. So it can be seen as a very positive term, in addition to some people using it in a term where you just need absorb the culture.

INTERVIEWER- Do you think that churches today should support a missionary who's spending 90-100% of his/her time in social action?

B6 - That kind of goes back to the earlier question of how do we have that balance between social action and gospel proclamation, and how do we discern if we've gone too far either way. And I think our balance of time is one way to discern whether we have gotten that wrong, and so if someone is spending a large majority of time on social action and not gospel proclamation then I would say they aren't fulfilling the role of a missionary, so I think it would be unwise at that point for a church to use funds to support that person.

B5 - I totally agree with [B6] on that point. And I think it depends on the situation that the, where did this missionary come from? Did we pick up this missionary along the way? Was this missionary sent out from their church? If they sent out that missionary

with a certain task then it wasn't in agreement that there would be 80, 90% of the social commission then there's a problem there; they're not really doing what they were called to do. At the same time, if that's what the church decided to do is send them out that direction, which I don't believe should be the focus, but they went with that focus anyways, and then the church changes their stance on it, then I think they would need to talk to that missionary and try to get that missionary, that couple, on board with where they're going and if not then they would need to properly cut ties. Again, I think with what we've talked about here in the room, that's not the primary goal, it's more of the byproduct of a good ministry. It will naturally lead toward a social interaction but it's not the purpose.

B1 - I would tend to agree with that because if someone's using 90-100% of their time that's including discretionary time, when they could be using it for the gospel but choosing not to, in a sense, choosing to use it on social purposes, and I could understand having to spend a lot of time on it because I'm even familiar with missionaries who are in foreign countries, and they're only there because they have this job under the country they've been under. And so for most of their business day time they're going to be involved there because that's how their visa is still there, that's how they stay in the country. But when it comes to the discretionary time, the getting up, if you're not using that for the spread of the gospel, the making of the disciples then you're not really focusing on what biblically should be the focus of those who go out on the behalf of Christ.

INTERVIEWER- Just to push that question a little bit further, that same question, what if he was in a country like Malawi where there are 14 million people and only 200 doctors and maybe your church has an opportunity to support a surgeon who's going to be doing surgeries for people who are unconscious, and most of his time was dealing with people who are not conscious and not evangelizing, or baptizing or teaching but he's very much involved with social action, do you think that's something that the church should be supporting?

B2 - I was gonna say, I think if a church wants to be serious about international missions I think it's necessary because I was thinking of the example of the medical doctor. He was a medical doctor which is a very serious job, and you have to dedicate 90% of your energy and knowledge to that because you don't you're going to kill somebody and if you don't they're going to kill you and the people you came with. And the guy that I was talking about who does the Bible translation in a very remote tribal area, this white guy can't just show up and start witnessing because they would kill him. So he has to be very wise and harmless as a dove so he can show this Muslim culture that he's genuinely there to love them and to help them. He can't just go in and start preaching Christ because he'll be dead in a matter of weeks. Like what happened with Jim Elliot. He tried to say we're here to come in peace—so anyways, I

think a church has to have that option open if they're willing to do that if they're serious about reaching unreached people groups in hostile areas.

B3 - I would agree with [B5] in the sense of the way a church is structured if their leadership and the body of that church agree that we should send them out, we should even give our money and our funds to this individual even if they're doing 90-100% that it's going to be up to each individual church. The problem that I think we have there is no paradigm in the New Testament for that type of ministry – none. Every person that was sent out from a local church that's any way financially supported in the New Testament, it's always about gospel speaking. So I think that's the difficulty we have, is saying that we can do this. But I do say that if a local church agrees we should provide funds for this person, maybe for five or six years once they become accustomed and get to know the people, you can have an effective gospel speaking ministry that that may not be a bad option for them to do, and that we would tolerate a 90-100% social interaction from the first couple of years.

B5 - I think too, that kind of a person who's going into the environment; he's a doctor, he's working with unconscious patients will have a lot of interaction with a lot of people there, even so, with the families that are involved with these people. I can't see even a good solid Christian person, who doesn't even consider himself a missionary being an effective life source of living out the gospel in that area. He would have a huge impact, I think, on people. And I have a hard time seeing a disconnect there, simply because he's just going there to be a doctor. He's not going to be an effective missionary whether he calls himself a missionary or not. His goal should still be to honor and glorify God and to love people around him. If the church understands that, that is furthering a ministry, whether they've heard the gospel or not it's furthering their ministry there in that context. I think that that is very much in line with what the New Testament talks about --- sending out people for the sake of Christ. You're living Christ before people whether you have an evangelistic to be preached or not. And that always draws people in, and brings people to many questions: well, you don't do this with us, you don't do that with us, why do you live this way, why are you so happy, why are you so joyful? I think it can be a very effective thing. It just depends on whether that's the goal of that missionary, or that person who becomes a doctor and whether the church sees that eye to eye with him.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, you guys are doing great. Let me just have you guys go around the room and tell me your name once again, first and last. And also your age so when I ask this next question it might us understand more.

B1, 22

B2, 28

B3, 24

B4, 28

B5, 25

B5, 25

INTERVIEWER- Okay, would everyone here agree that in your lifetime, which we've already established is less than 40 or 50 years, would you agree that in your lifetime you've seen a trend in mission work that moves from less social action towards more social action? And if so, why do you think that is?

B5 - I would agree with that. I mean, not living very long, but a lot of the reading that I come across and different agendas that churches have, especially in America, it just sounds very socialistic and that's just kind of the trend. That's just the way things are going, and the reason behind that? I think that especially Western culture is very materialistic and they're very materialistic minded and it is a lot of the here and now and I think that there's an underlying assumption. A part of it could be, that it is a man-centered view of missions—they want people to feel good in this life and that's what it's about and that makes that the prize goal, so you think you have control over those things and it's almost a sense of, where they wouldn't necessarily line up theologically like this, but there's almost a sense of "this is what God would want. He doesn't want us to go through suffering, He doesn't want us to go through hard times; He just wants us to enjoy life the way that he's designed it." And so it's all about that. And I think they just goes against the way that, it's like trying to subdue the curse of sin, that won't be subdued. It's not ultimately going to happen. But we think in our advanced technology and the world that we live in that we've done quite a good job with that and we can keep doing that. And pretty much eradicate the poor from the world and I don't think it looks; it doesn't have a very high view of God or a God centered focus in mission work.

INTERVIEWER-I think everyone said yes, right? Did anyone say no?

B1 – I said "I wouldn't really know." I've only been in the church for six years and the two I was in high school, so I wouldn't have been conscious of those things. So I only have four years of experience so I haven't seen much of a trend in anyway

INTERVIEWER- That's helpful. Good, next?

B3 - I just want to add to some stuff [B5] said, it seems like in American culture – with *Row v. Wade*, the church almost took a position in the 70s and 80s particularly from isolating themselves from the world and now we're seeing maybe too far of a

pendulum swing of the church being more involved in the world. As glad as you could be that we are becoming involved with other countries, and poor and needy – those things are good and biblical. But the pendulum might've swung too far where now we can no longer have a true gospel message to give those people. So we feed them, but we're not giving them an eternal benefit through a proper gospel interpretation. So as happy as I would be that we are doing social interactions there's that pendulum swing that the church is now instead of being against the world, it's starting to tie its hands a little closer to worldly ideologies and practices.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, if there has been a trend where the pendulum of mission work is swinging more towards social action, is that something we should be concerned about, and how should we approach this issue?

INTERVIEWER- First of all, is that something we should be concerned about?

ENTIRE FOCUS GROUP- Yes.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, good. Anyone in here say no? All right.

ENTIRE FOCUS GROUP- laughter

INTERVIEWER- How should we approach this issue?

B5 - That's a tough question. And a large degree, I think that there's nothing, and going back to the fact that it's really God who builds His church and founds it and we're part of it and workers and tools that help do that, but we're not going to fix the world abroad just by coming up with a really good slogan, or a good mission statement. I think in a large sense, man is choosing to do what he wants to do and I think in a sense, he's taken, because I think to some degree it's that the way that God has built His church so far has been unsatisfactory to people so they've chosen to go their own to go and help people out. And it's a feeling-centered mindset. That's a tough question. I don't think it's something that we can necessarily address and fix it, at least find a perfect solution for it in a man-centered perspective. I think there's gotta be a lot of prayer for the church at large; for it go back to its roots, and just faithfulness in the church that you're a part of. You're working alongside people and ministering to them as you see God has called you to be a minister in your local body. That example will speak, a lot of times, louder than the words that you say. And it'll affect the people around you, but you can only go so far as what God has built you to do yourself and be faithful with what you can do. And you let God do the work that He's going to do. If life is going the wrong direction, that's probably a good thing because that's the way God has said its going to go. This church isn't always going to be faithful. Most of the churches in Revelation at that point, weren't doing great. And in many ways that's the same today—there's not a lot of churches that are doing well.

But I just take encouragement from Ephesians 1- Jesus Christ is still head of His church so His work is still going in a sense, in the way that He wants. He's honoring those who are still faithful to Him and it doesn't always mean it's going to be some grand explosion of everyone coming to the Lord, but they understand the work of Christ and the way it's supposed to be done.

INTERVIEWER- Anyone else want to approach this issue?

B3 - I think we just have to remember the words of Christ. He says, "The poor you're always going to have with you." So I think we should be concerned that there's such a rise in social gospel, only if it minimizes the truthfulness of the gospel message as its embodied in the Scriptures. There's nothing wrong, I don't think, with the emphasis on social action and helping those who are poor, but if that emphasis negates speaking the truth of God's word then we have a serious problem and I think we need to, if anything, swing the pendulum back the other way because the poor will always be around. You can't cure poverty.

B4 - The question I remember correctly is what we should do about the swing towards social justice.

INTERVIEWER- Social action.

B4 - Social action. I think clarification of terms would be a great place to start. A lot of people don't even know what missional means or social justice. I think it would be good for churches to be very clear and define those terms. I think also a good example for us is in Revelation 2, when Jesus Christ has a word for the church in Ephesus and He tells them, " But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore, from where you have fallen and repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come and remove your lamp stand from its place unless you repent." So from that passage, He sets a good example that the church needs to love Christ above all, and not get sidetracked in these of this world and repentance would be a good place to start.

INTERVIEWER- Okay, last question. Has anyone here ever heard of the Student Volunteer Movement? The movement in the late 1800s, early 1900s, it was the largest missionary movement here in the United States and sent out about 20,000 missionaries and had about 80,000 people supporting it financially.

B1- I have.

INTERVIEWER- You're [B1], right?

B1- Yes, [B1].

INTERVIEWER- Okay, what have you heard about it?

B1- I've always heard it phrased as the beginning of the modern missions movement; the first missionaries to go to far away nations like India, and China and things along those lines.

INTERVIEWER- Okay

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